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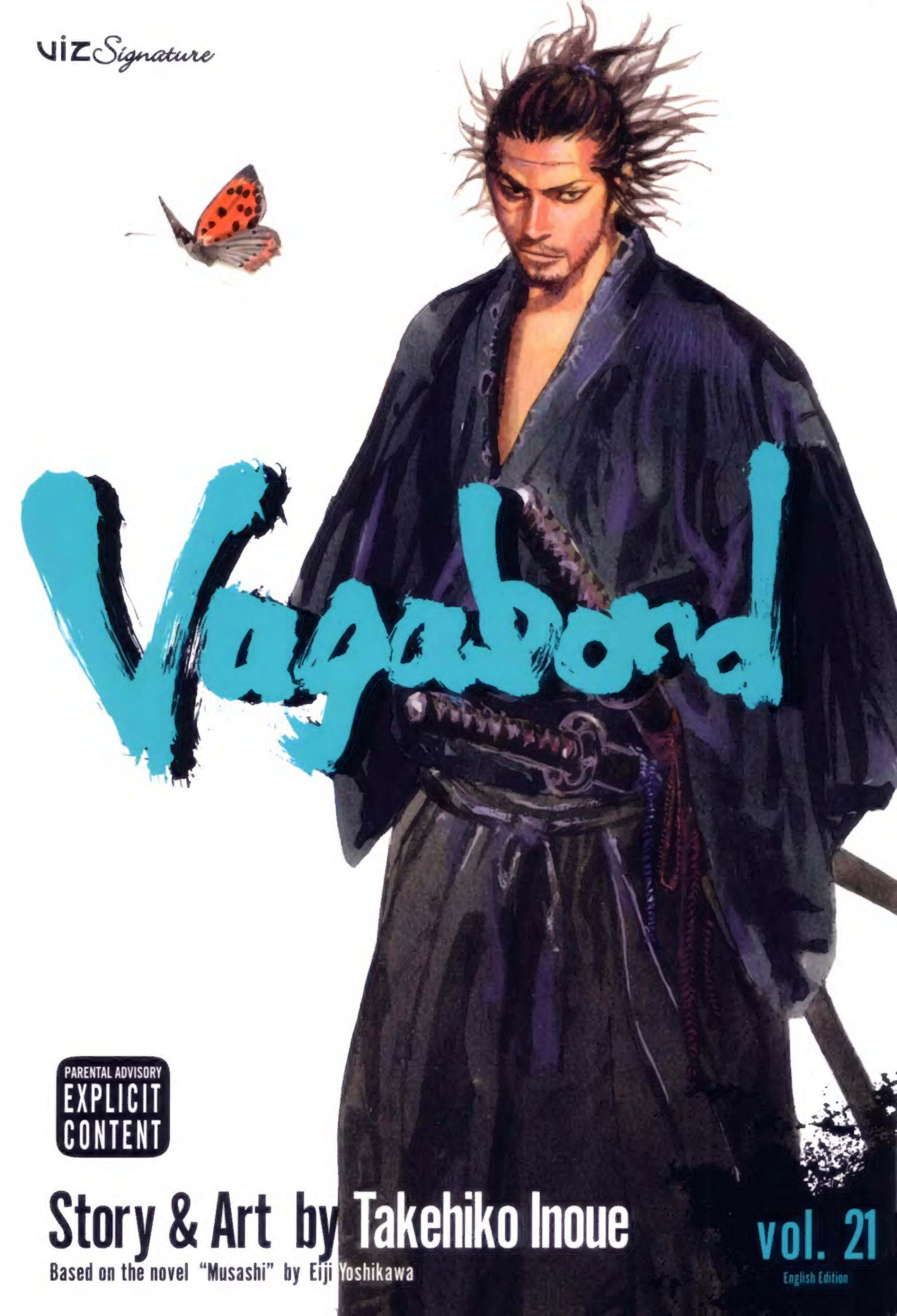

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 21

English Edition

Vagabond Vol. 21

Story & Art by
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Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

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PARENTAL ADVISORY
VAGABOND is rated M for Mature and is recommended for mature readers. This volume contains graphic violence and sexually explicit situations.

Vagabond
vol. 21
Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue
Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

THE WINTERS IN KYOTO...

IS THERE ALWAYS THIS MUCH SNOW?

...THE SON OF YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ.

I AM YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ...

I FIGHT NOW TO PRESERVE HIS HONOR.

#180 Gathering in Kyoto

KYOTO AT THE END OF THE NINTH YEAR OF THE KEICHŌ ERA (1604).

TEN DAYS PRIOR TO THIS INCIDENT...

Flip

Flip

Flip

(YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ CHALLENGES MIYAMOTO MUSASHI TO A DUEL TO BE HELD AT THE COURTYARD OF RENGEŌIN TEMPLE ON THE NINTH DAY OF THE NEW YEAR.)

TU

NK

告

約束ニ依リ試合申ス事

蓮華王院裏地

日卯ノ下刻

場所

正月九日

時

右神文ニカケテ誓約候事

右相手方者違ヘアルニ

於テハ世間ヘ何カニテ笑ヒ申ス

今当方ニ違ヘアル時ハ即チ

神罰ヲ受クルモノ也

慶長九年除夜

吉岡伝七郎

宮本武蔵殿

MURMUR

THIS IS THE FIGHT EVERYONE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT.

MURMUR

WOW...

THIS IS IT.

I SEE.

MURMUR

YOSHIOKA
SEIJŪRŌ!!

FICH

FICH

FICH

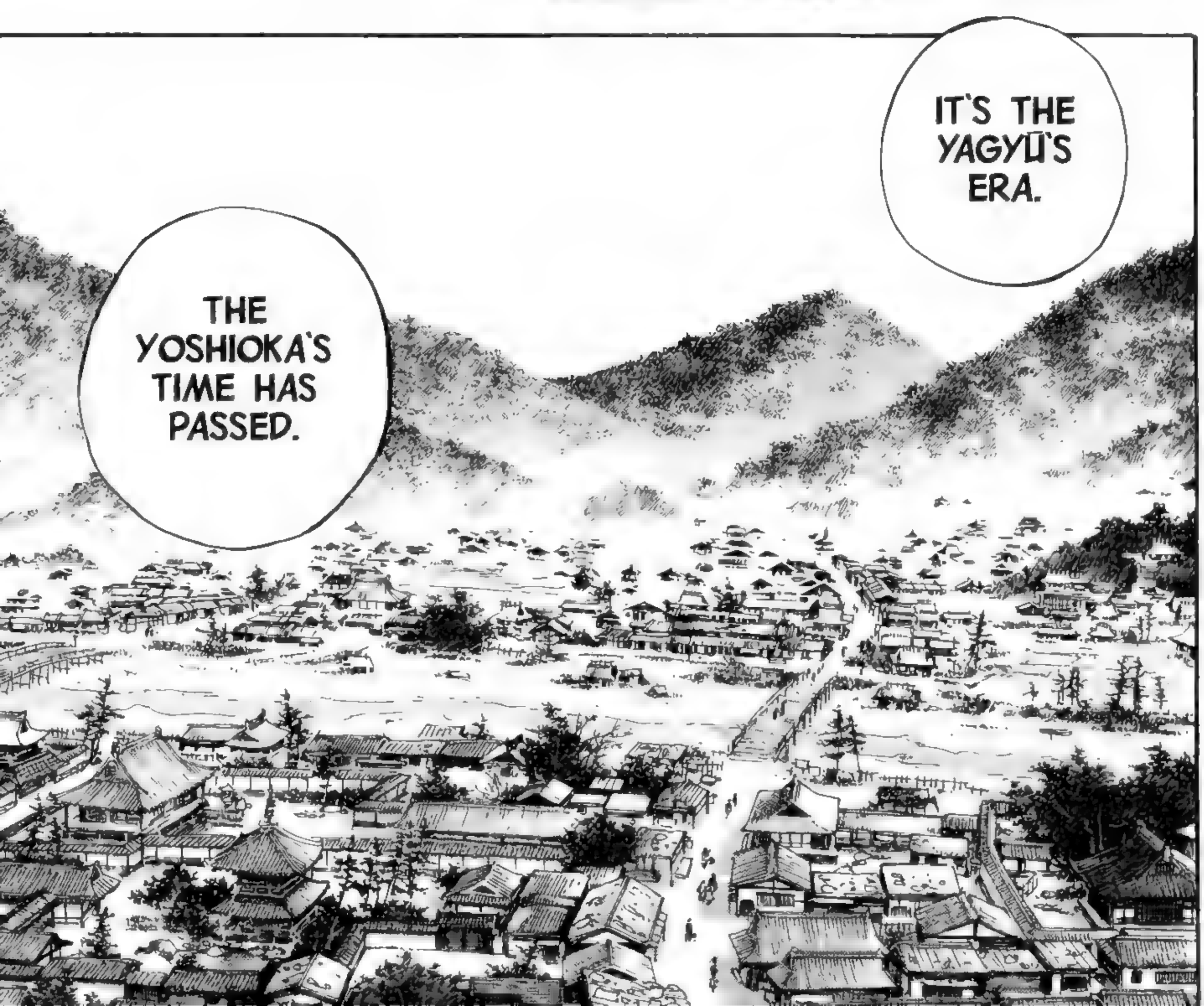
FICH

YOU'LL DIE.
H-HEY...
IS THAT MUSASHI?
WHAT ?
IT'S BEEN A YEAR.
I SEE YOU'VE CHANGED ...

CUT DOWN THE YOUNGER BROTHER, THEN THE OLDER BROTHER WILL *HAVE* TO FIGHT ME...

FWIP
PLIP

IF IT'S A REPUTATION YOU'RE AFTER, THEN YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME WITH THE YOSHIOKA.


IT'S THE YAGYŪ'S ERA.
THE YOSHIOKA'S TIME HAS PASSED.

YOU'RE THE ONE I'M AFTER, SEIJŪRŌ.

NOT THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS...

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED EITHER.

IT REALLY GETS TO ME...

I'M JUST MAKING GOOD ON MY PROMISE TO DENSHICHIRŌ.

WHAT DOES?

YOU THINK YOU'RE STRONGER THAN ME, DON'T YOU?

DEFEAT EVERYONE WHO MAY BE STRONGER THAN YOU...

...THEN YOU MAY BE CALLED INVINCIBLE.

THAT'S HOW TO EARN THE RIGHT TO BE CALLED INVINCIBLE.

KEEP CUTTING EVERYONE DOWN, UNTIL YOU'RE THE LAST MAN STANDING...

PERHAPS YOU WERE MORE MATURE *LAST* YEAR.

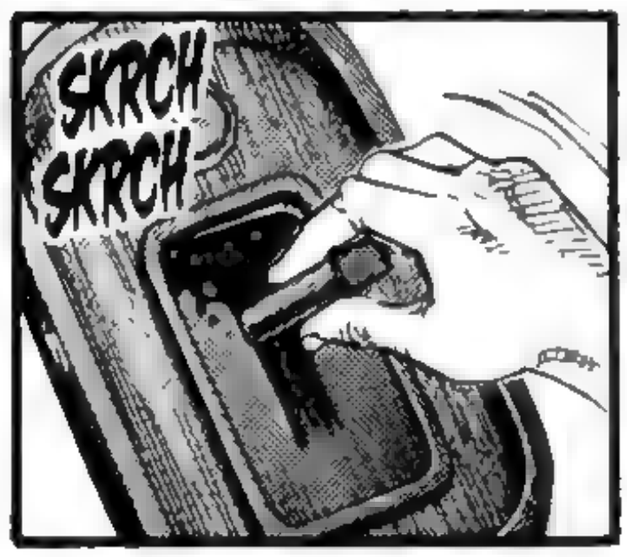
IT'S REALLY TOO BAD.

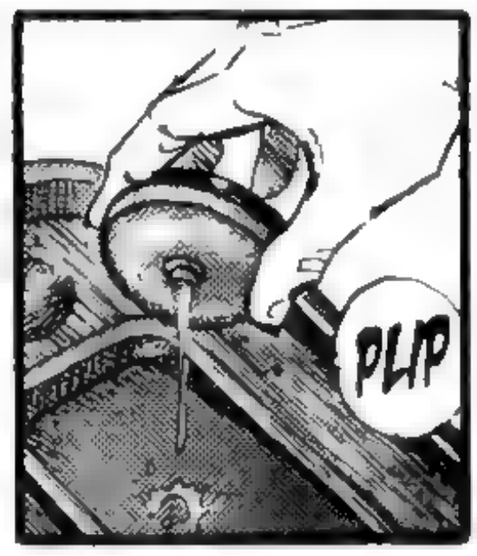
FICH

FICH

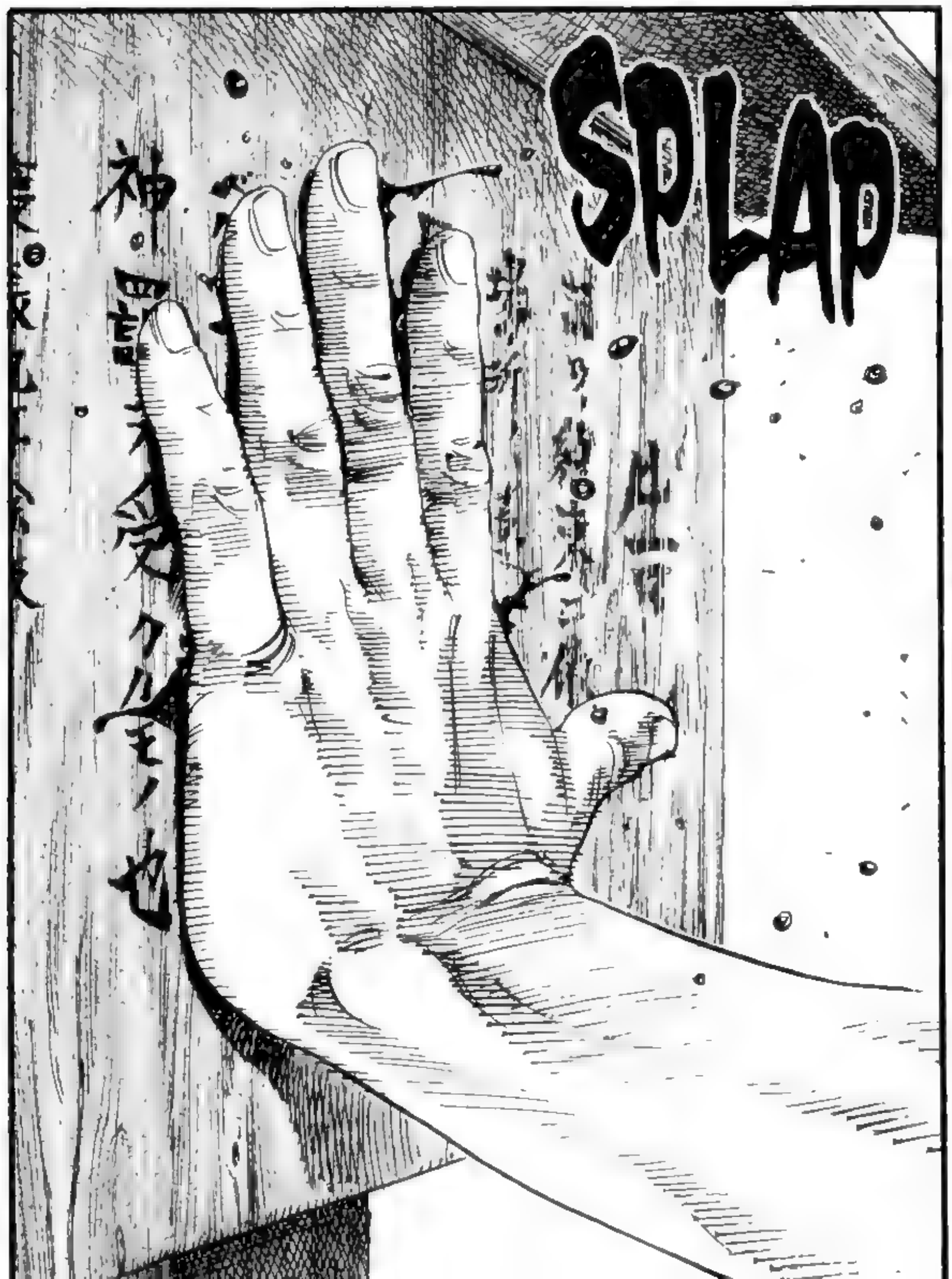
RUSTLE

.....


SKRCH
SKRCH


PLIP

GULP


SPLAP

...?

GASP!

OH NO!!

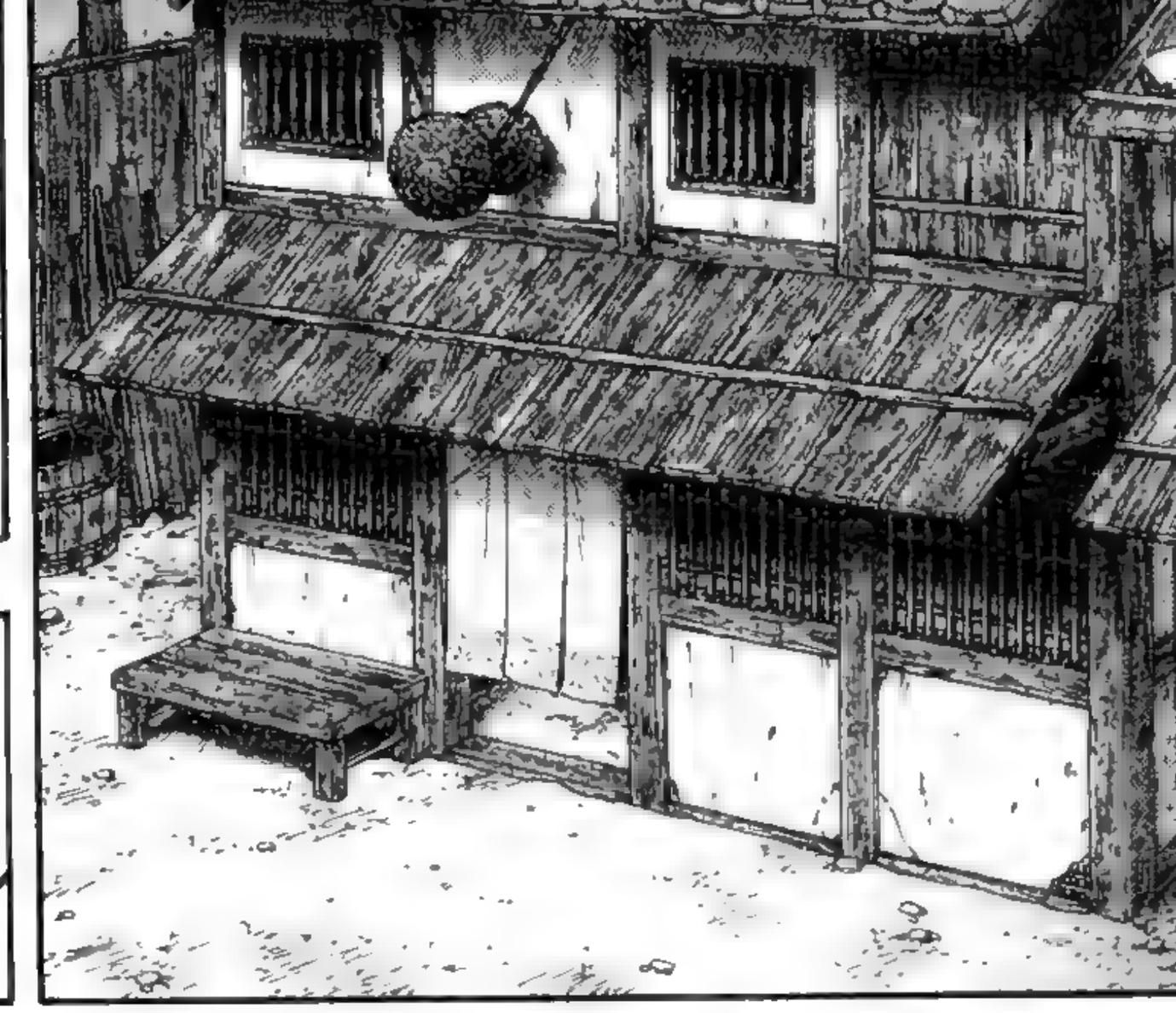
THIS IS BAD.

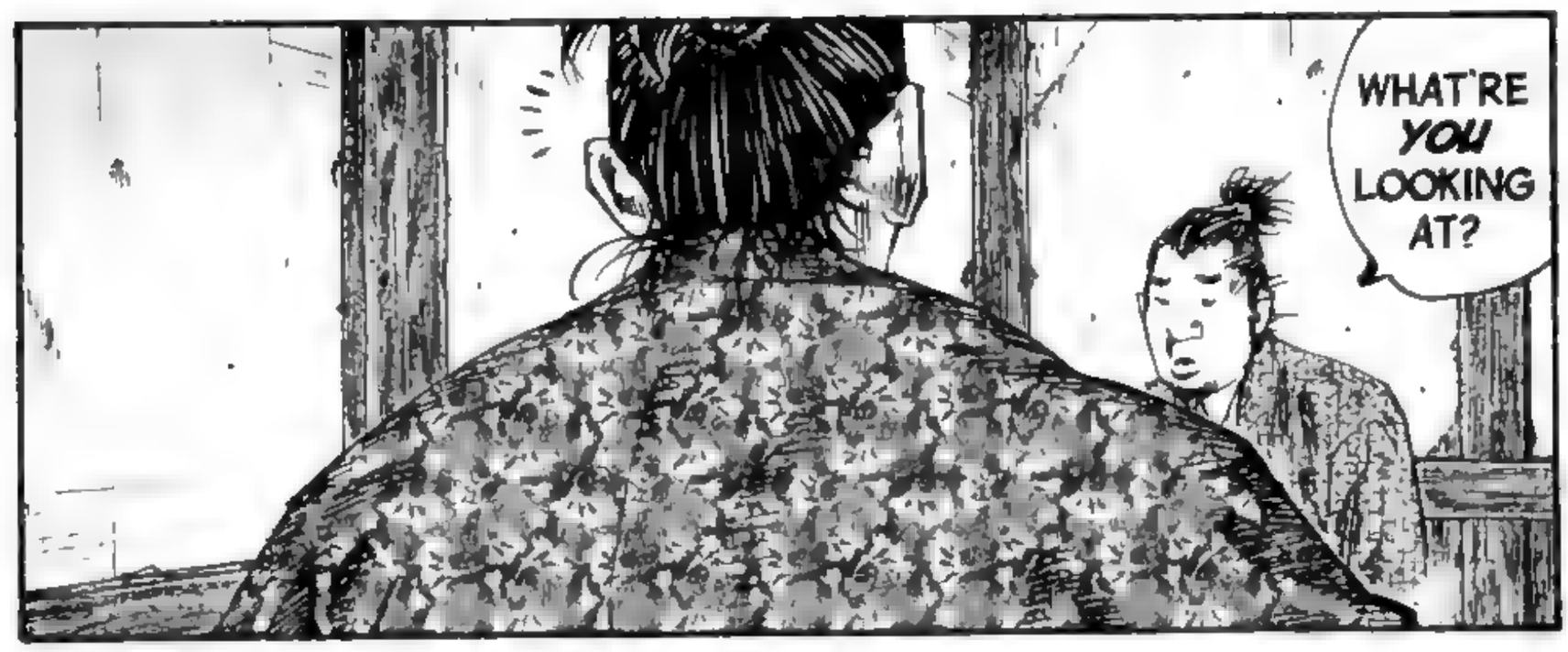
FICH

FICH

GLUG
GLUG

FWIP
AHH! THAT'S GOOD!

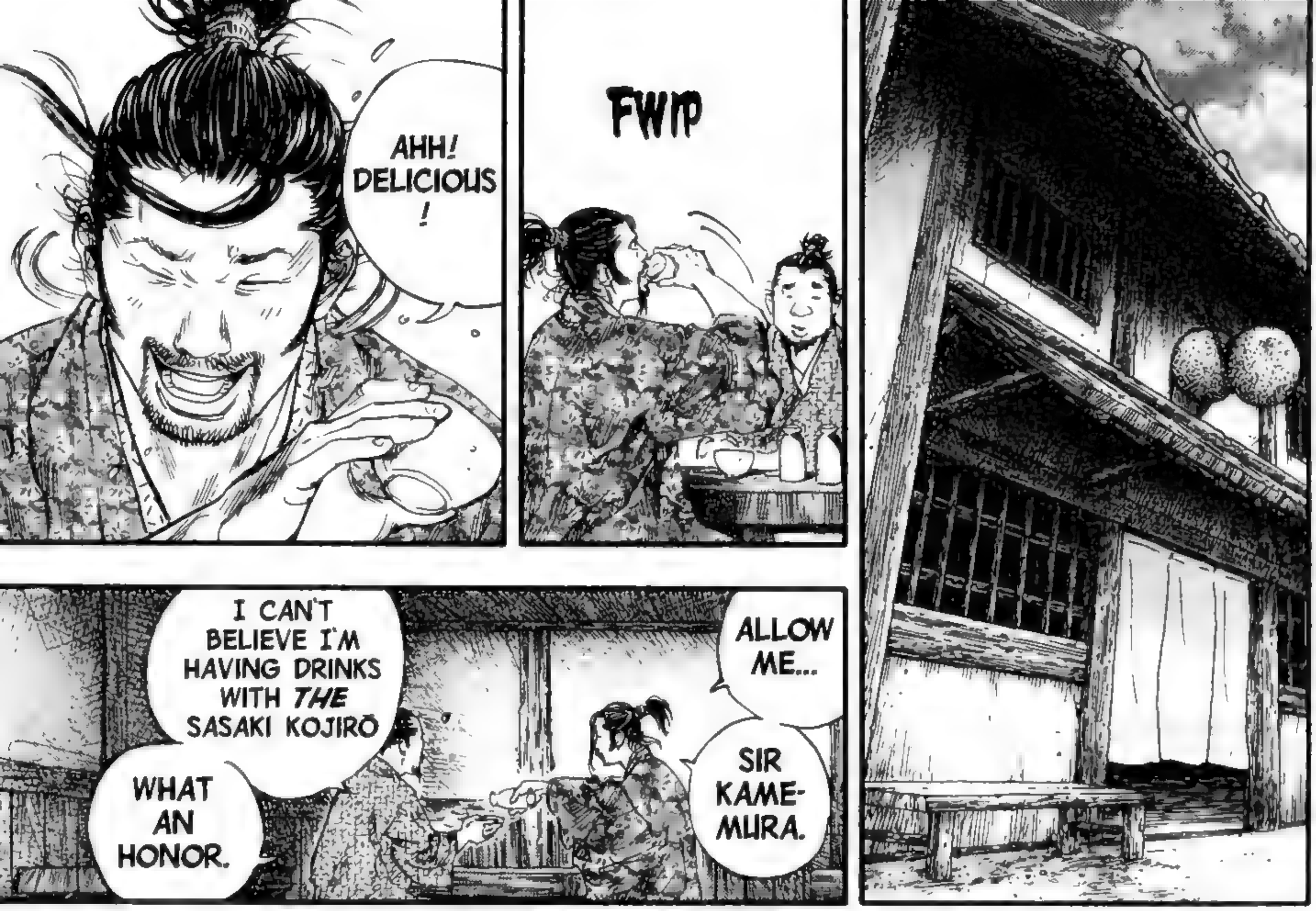



WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING AT?

PLEASE DO FORGIVE MY RUDENESS.
YOU DRINK YOUR SAKE WITH SUCH RELISH.

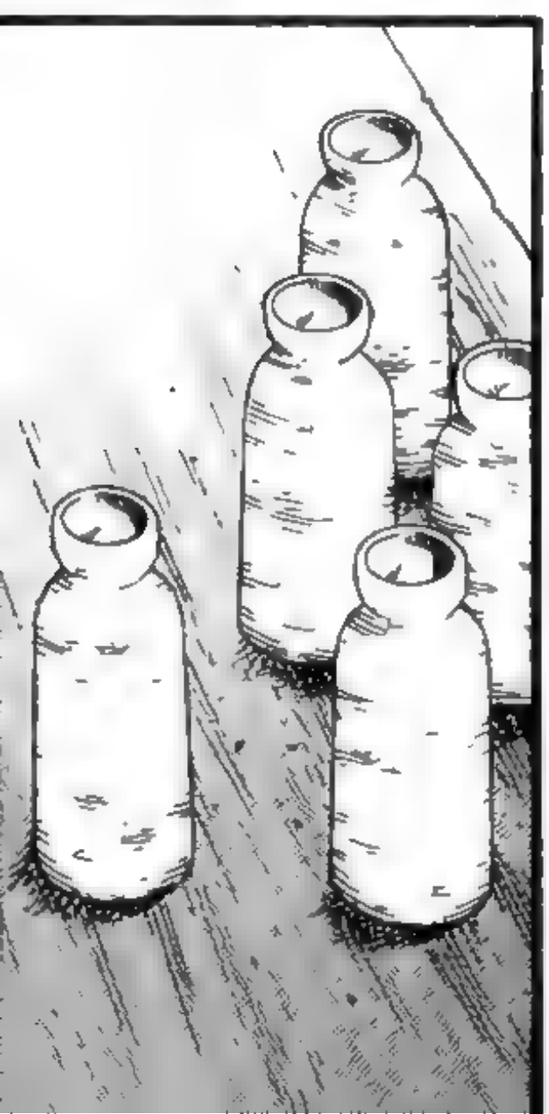
AHH! DELICIOUS!

FWIP



I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M HAVING DRINKS WITH *THE* SASAKI KOJIRŌ
WHAT AN HONOR.
ALLOW ME...
SIR KAME-MURA.

...I MIGHT NOT BE THE MOST CULTIVATED GENTLEMAN IN THE LAND, BUT AS A MAN WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD, I CAN TELL.
TELL WHAT?
OH, COME NOW...
SIR KAME-MURA...



HUH?

I SUSPECT THAT YOU ARE ONE OF THEM.
THERE ARE SWORDSMEN OUT THERE WHOSE REPUTA-TIONS FALL FAR BELOW THEIR GREAT ABILITIES...

WHT ARE YOU...?
WHAT ?

HMPH
AS DRUNK AS I AM, YOU STILL CAN'T TAKE ME ON?
PERHAPS I WAS MISTAKEN ABOUT YOU.

DRAW YOUR SWORD...
NOW THEN...
...?

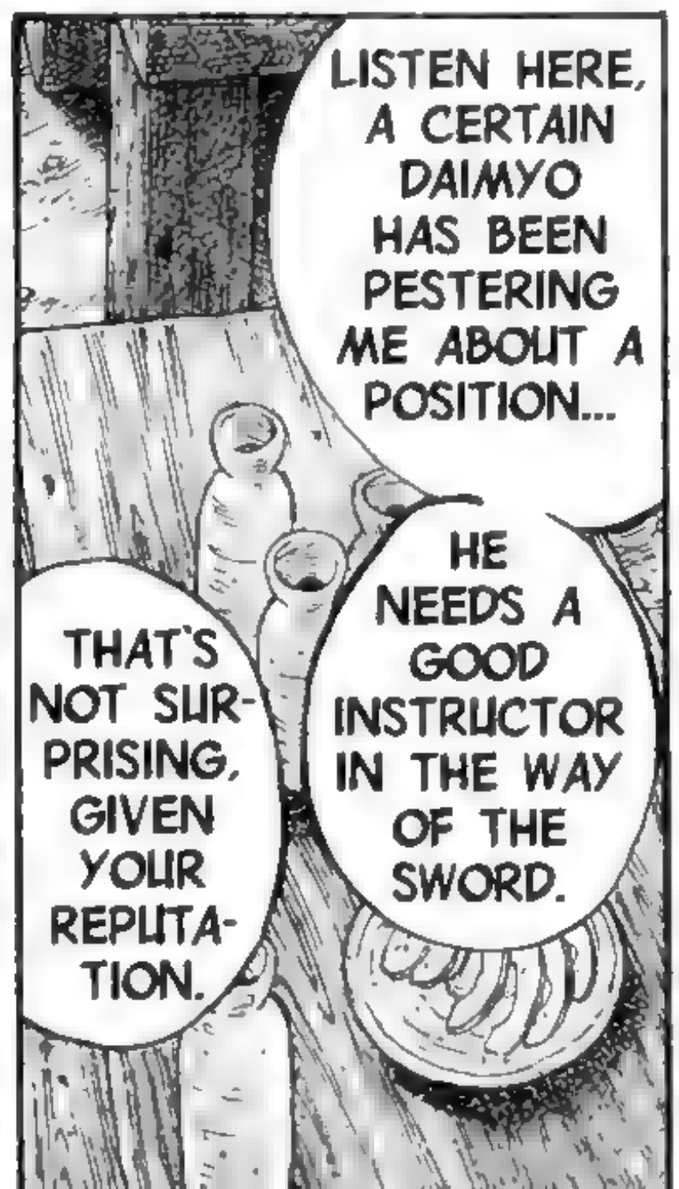
FSH

WHAT?
URK

THEY FIGHTING?
WHO KNOWS.

I SEE NOW I WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU.
ANOTHER ROUND, KAMEMURA!

BUT I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES ELSEWHERE, SO I COULDN'T POSSIBLY ACCEPT HIS OFFER.
NOW I WOULDN'T WANT TO INCONVENIENCE YOU BY ASKING YOU TO TAKE MY PLACE...


LISTEN HERE, A CERTAIN DAIMYO HAS BEEN PESTERING ME ABOUT A POSITION...
HE NEEDS A GOOD INSTRUCTOR IN THE WAY OF THE SWORD.
THAT'S NOT SURPRISING, GIVEN YOUR REPUTATION.

GLEAM
!?

GULP
I-I SEE.
A RECOM-MENDA-TION.

I'M SORRY FOR TESTING YOU.
AT THE RISK OF BEING INSOLENT, I JUST HAD TO BE SURE I COULD GIVE YOU MY RECOM-MENDATION.

OH, I WOULDN'T MIND.
GULP
BUT I'M NOT SURE I'M QUALIFIED.

TUGG
NOW WE ALSO HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF THE MATTER OF THE RECOMMENDATION FEE—AS I'M SURE YOU'RE WELL AWARE, IT'S CUSTOMARY IN THIS SORT OF SITUATION.

HOW MUCH?

KCHNG
HEH HEH HEH.
.....

AH...

KRK

AHH...

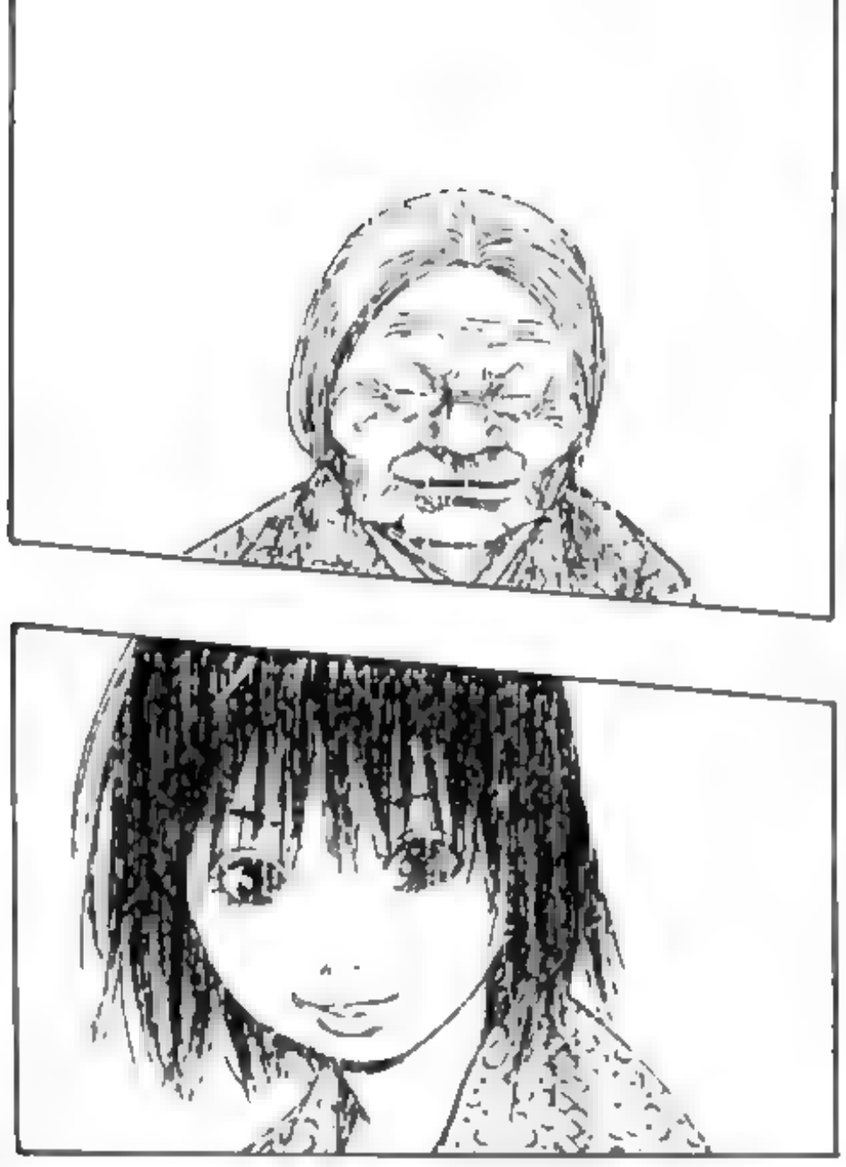
KRK

KRK

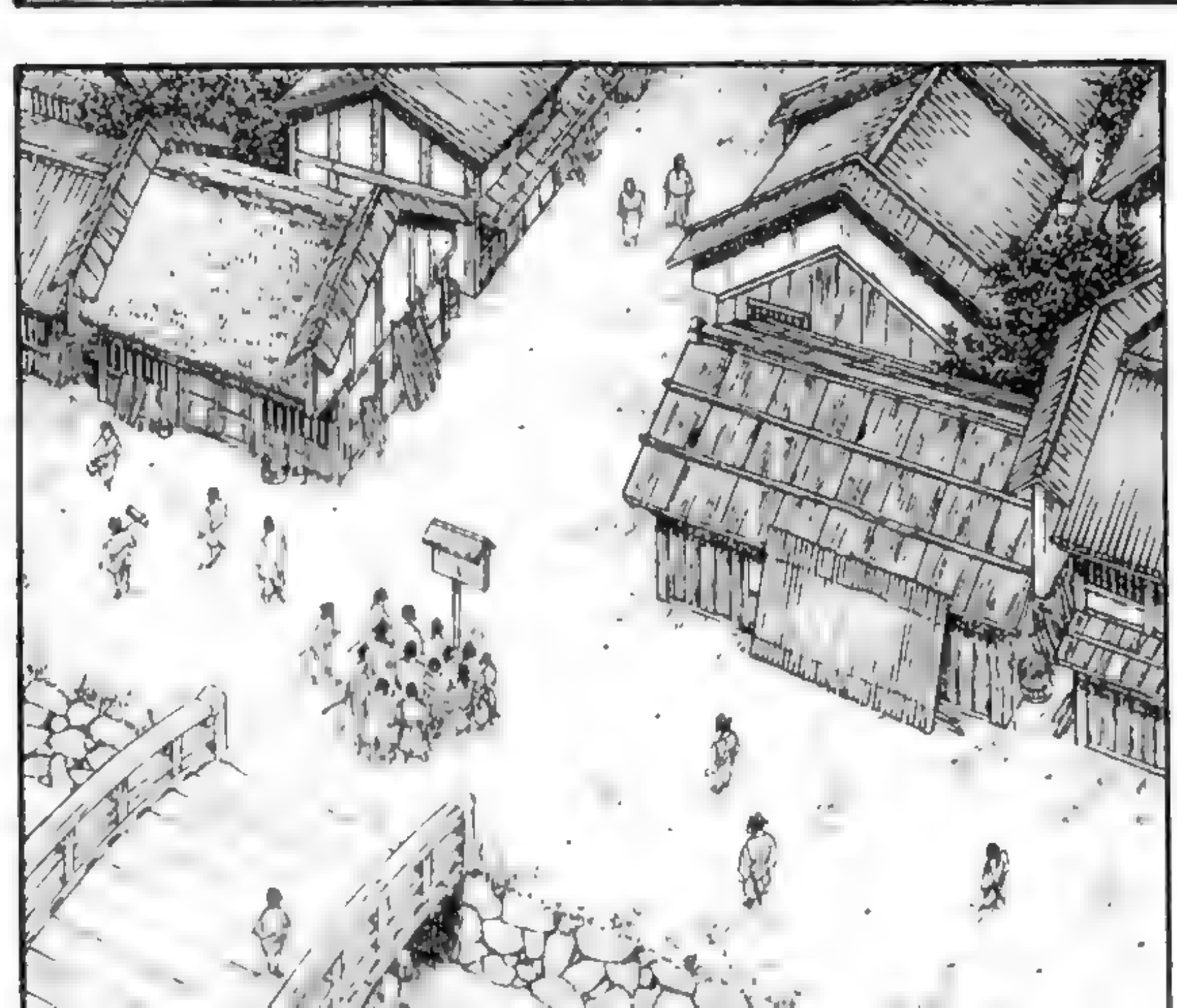
AHH...

AH...

AH...



I FEEL EMPTY INSIDE...
I'M ALL ALONE.
SLP
SLP
SLP



WHO DID THIS...?

WHAT ?!

MUSASHI ...

HE'S ALREADY HERE IN KYOTO...

HMPH ...

AHH.

AHHH.

!

AH HA HA.

WHO LAUGHED ?

WHAT NERVE !

AUHH!

Vagabond

(WONDER WHEN I'LL GET THAT RECOMMENDATION...)
(BA-BUMP BA-BUMP)

#181 | Carving Demons

WHAT'S THAT...?

A DEAF SAMURAI...

(YOSHIOKA KEMPO)

AND HE COULD ONLY SAY "UHH" AND "AHH."

RIGHT.

...BUT HE HAD THE INNOCENT LOOK OF A CHILD...

HE WAS VERY TALL...

!!

FWISH

HE DODGED ME WITH EASE!!

WHAT ?!

THAT DEAF FELLOW COULD TELL THAT ŌTAGURO'S LOOKS ARE WORSE THAN HIS BITE.

YES.

WHAT HAPPENED ?

WELL, SEEING HIM SMILING AT OUR POST JUST ANGERED ME TO NO END...

...SO I TOOK A SWING AT HIM.

SIGH

OTHERWISE, YOU'D BE LOOKING FOR YOUR OWN HEAD.
YOU WERE LUCKY YOU DIDN'T DRAW YOUR SWORD.
!!

HE JUST SIGHED AND WALKED AWAY.
LIKE HE WAS BORED.

THAT WAS SASAKI KOJIRŌ.

IT WAS *HIM.*
THERE CAN'T BE TWO PEOPLE LIKE THAT...

!!

HYUU

WE EN-
COUNTERED
HIM FOUR
YEARS
AGO...

SO
KOJIRŌ
IS IN
KYOTO
TOO.

FWOOSH

NNGH.

FWOOSH

HAH!

HAH!

FWOOSH

HUF

HUF

HUF

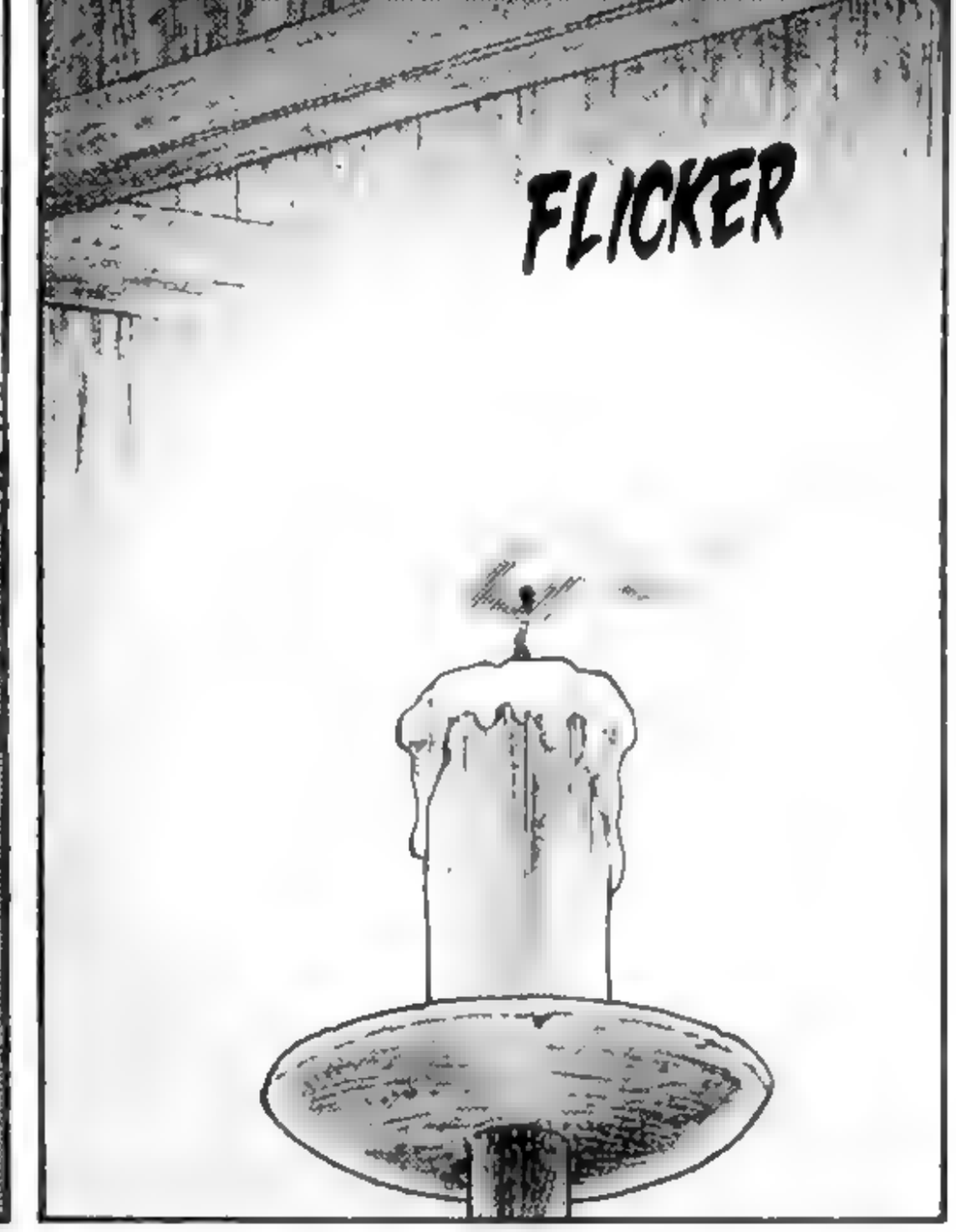
PLIP

PLIP

SHAH!

HUF
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO STAND THERE LIKE THAT?

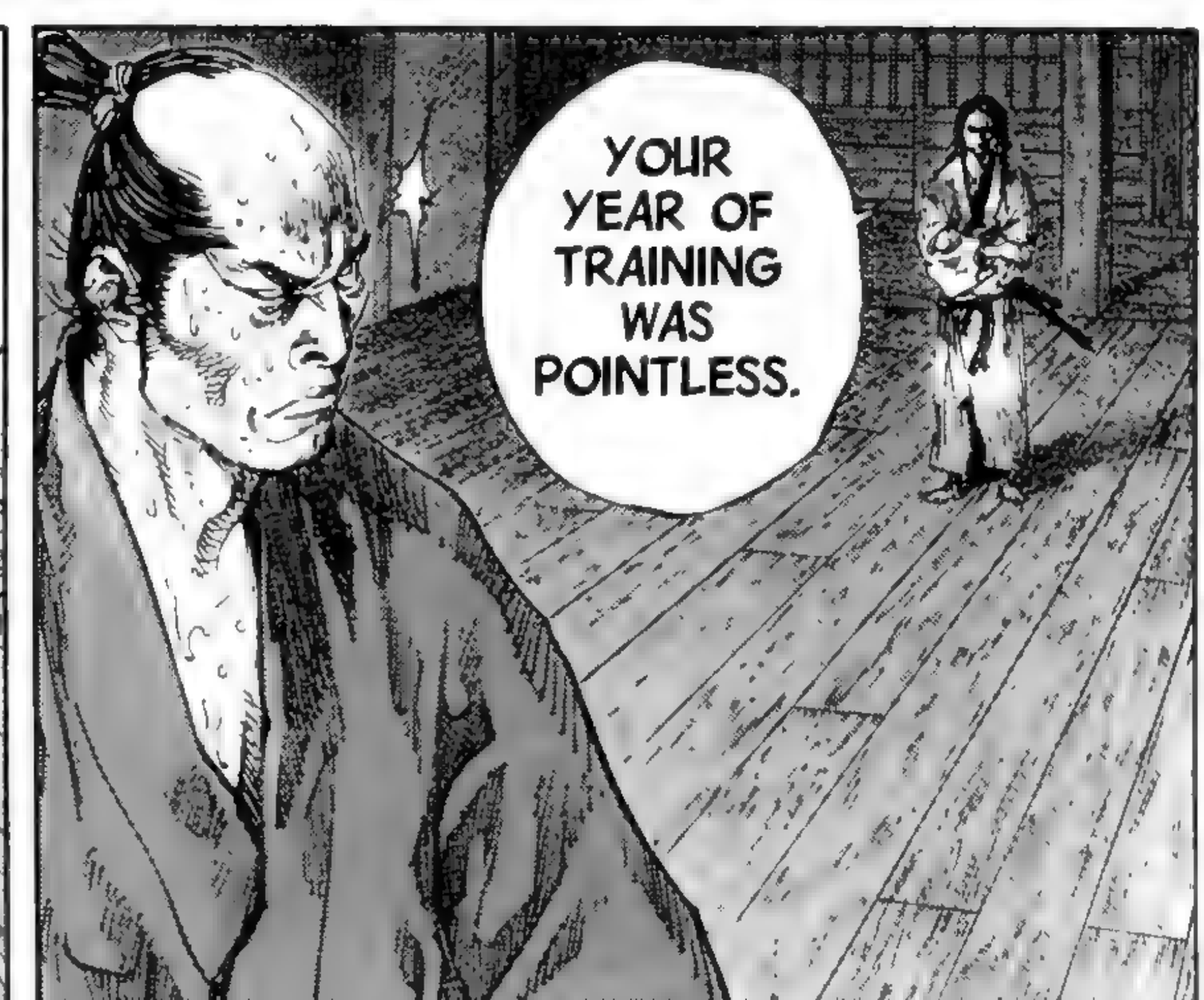
HUF
HUF


FLICKER

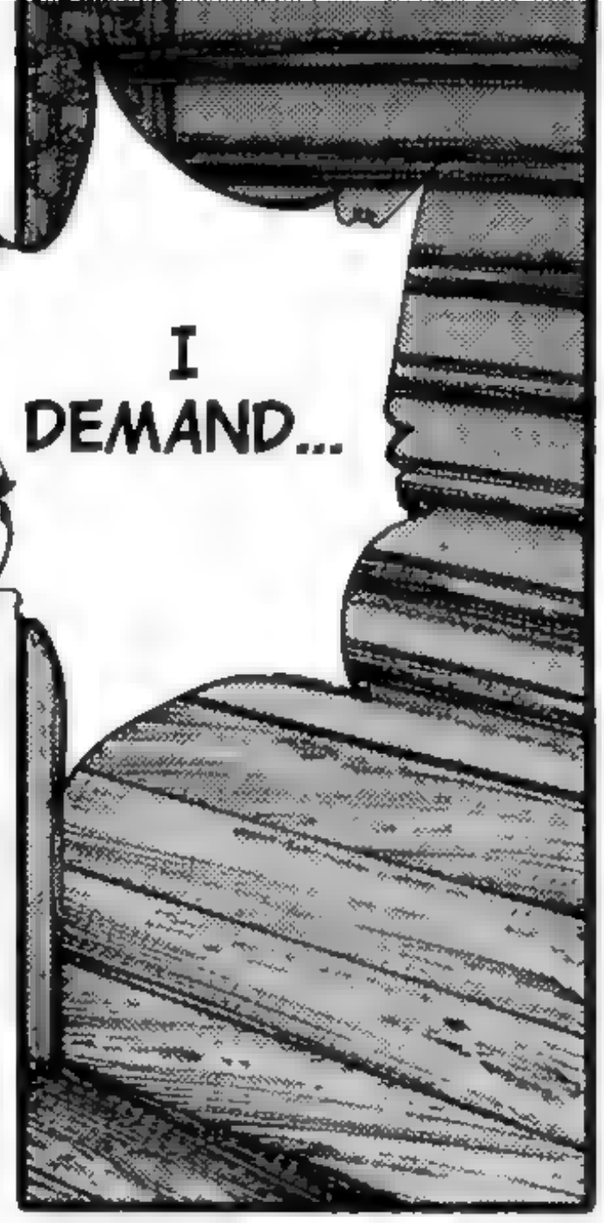
HMPH.
I'M HEADED THERE AFTER THIS.

HUF
HUF
AREN'T YOU GOING TO THE PLEASURE QUARTERS?

HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT!!


YOUR YEAR OF TRAINING WAS POINTLESS.

GRB

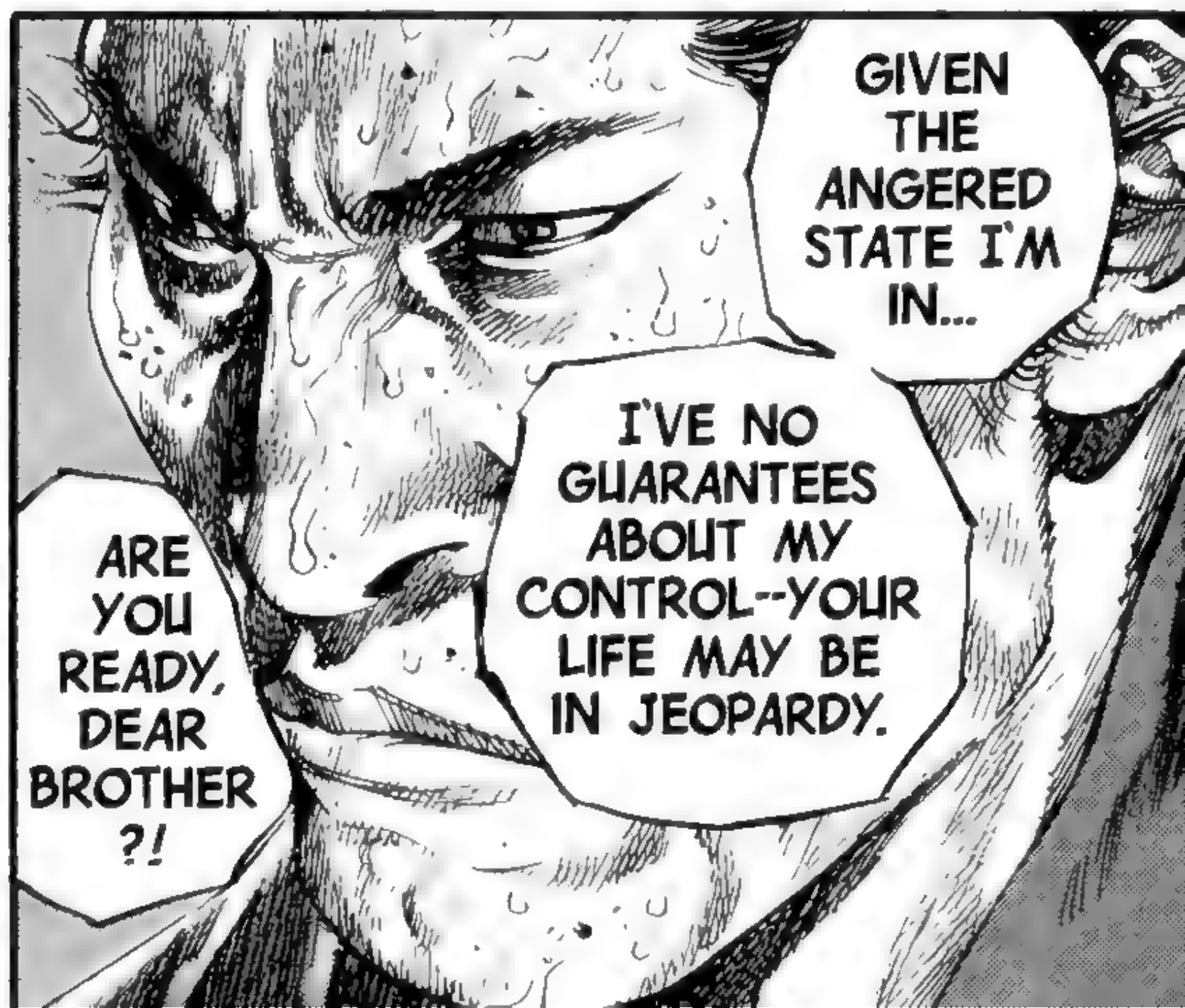

I DEMAND...

OR PERHAPS YOU'VE REACHED YOUR FULL POTENTIAL.

I WARN YOU--

I WARN YOU THOUGH...
PROVE YOUR POINT!!
...A TRAINING SESSION!!

HA HA!


ARE YOU READY, DEAR BROTHER ?!
I'VE NO GUARANTEES ABOUT MY CONTROL--YOUR LIFE MAY BE IN JEOPARDY.
GIVEN THE ANGERED STATE I'M IN...

THUNK

NNGH!

TMP

YOU WERE RAISED IN THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL...

WHILE MUSASHI IS A WILD BEAST FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

YOUR YEAR OF TRAINING WAS TIME ILL SPENT, DENSHICHIRŌ.

TUNK
...
THWAK!
YOU COULD'VE CUT HIM DOWN WHEN THAT FIRE BROKE OUT.
INSTEAD, YOU MADE A DATE TO MEET HIM AGAIN.

LIKE A SILLY LITTLE GIRL.

TUNK

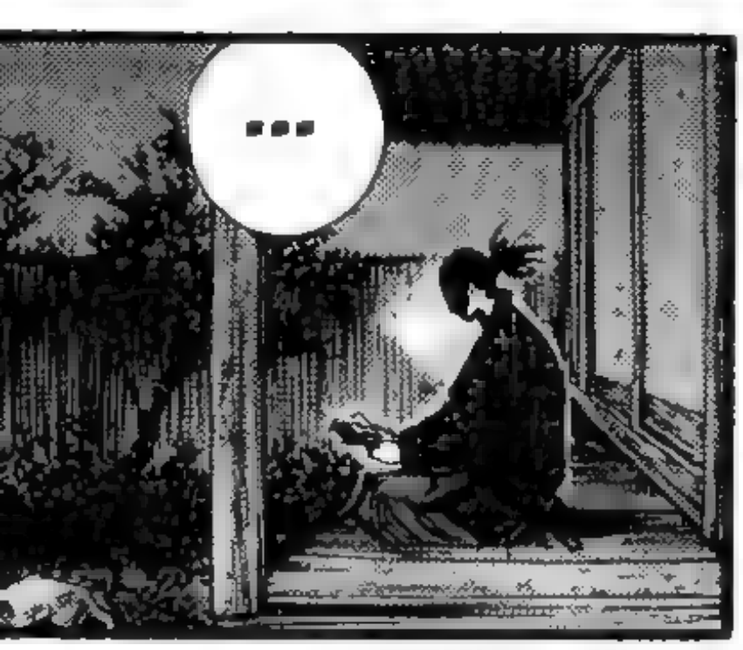
KLAT

KLAK

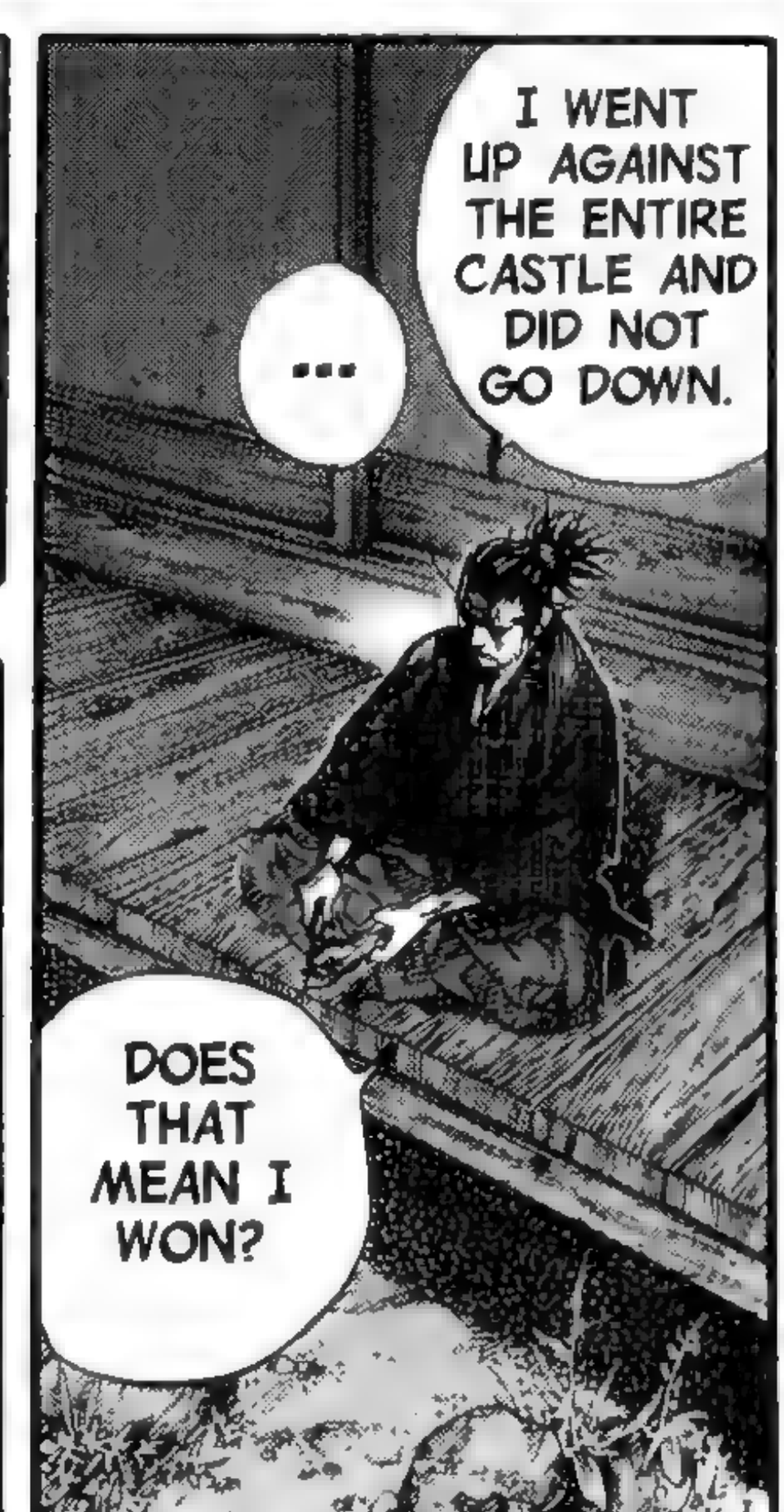
KRIK
KRIK

IT'S THE YAGYŪ'S ERA.

THE YAGYŪ...


...

STANDING BEFORE SEKISHŪSAI, I WAS NOTHING.
HAH!


...
I WENT UP AGAINST THE ENTIRE CASTLE AND DID NOT GO DOWN.
DOES THAT MEAN I WON?

I TRY SO HARD TO CATCH UP TO THESE OLD MEN...
...TO UNDERSTAND THEM.
SEKI-SHŪSAI.
IN'EI.

I WAS SO INTENT ON "FACING THE INVINCIBLE."

I HAD THE CHANCE TO FACE SEKISHŪSAI.

I WAS OBSESSED.

BUT I WORSHIPPED HIM AS A "SWORD SAINT" BEFORE I EVEN MET HIM.

HE WAS THE MASTER, SO HE HAD TO BE GREAT.

I THINK TOO MUCH ABOUT THE WAY OF THE SWORD.

I'M TOO CAUGHT UP WITH THE WORLD.

IT WAS NO MATCH.

HA HA HA

THERE WAS NO MATCH.

WHICH MEANS I DIDN'T LOSE.

I'D ALREADY ASSUMED HE'D BE INVINCIBLE.

HAH, THERE'S NO WAY I COULD HAVE WON.

IT'S JUST A BLADE MADE TO CUT PEOPLE DOWN.

THE SWORD IS JUST A SWORD.

A TOOL.

I KNOW WHAT THOSE OLD COOTS HAVE THAT I LACK...

I FINALLY GET IT.

HARUMPH

YEARS OF CUTTING PEOPLE DOWN.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN CARVING ?
A BUDDHA ?

NOD

SIR...
...IT'S AWFULLY COLD TONIGHT, ISN'T IT?
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TO OFFER, BUT DINNER IS READY.

GASP!

HUH?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?

HOW DREAD-FUL.

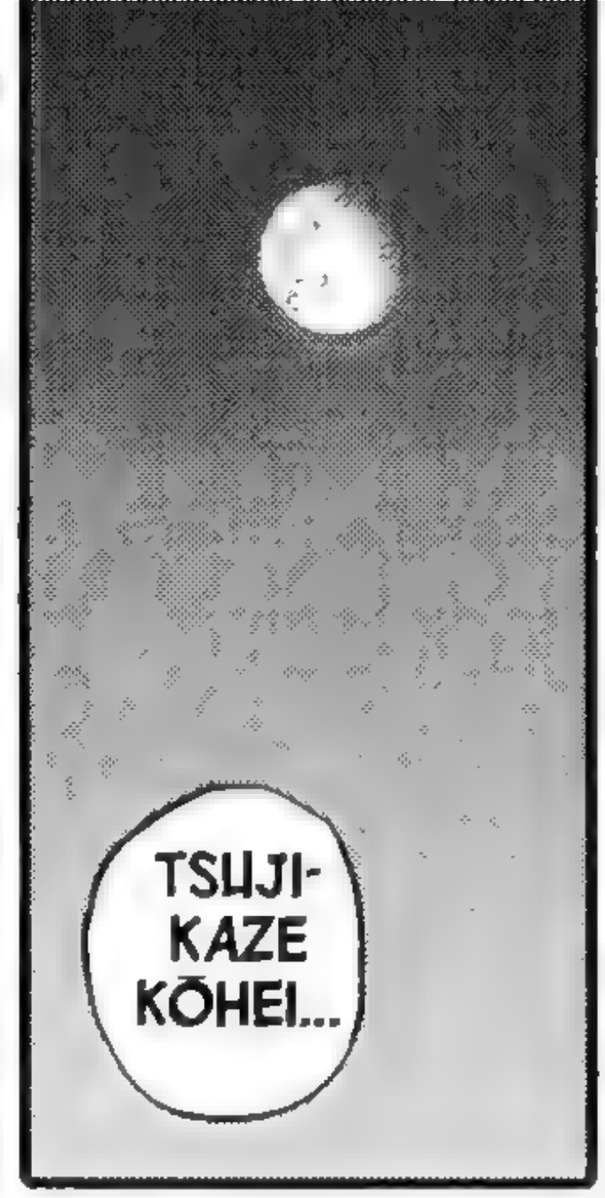
.....
FUMP

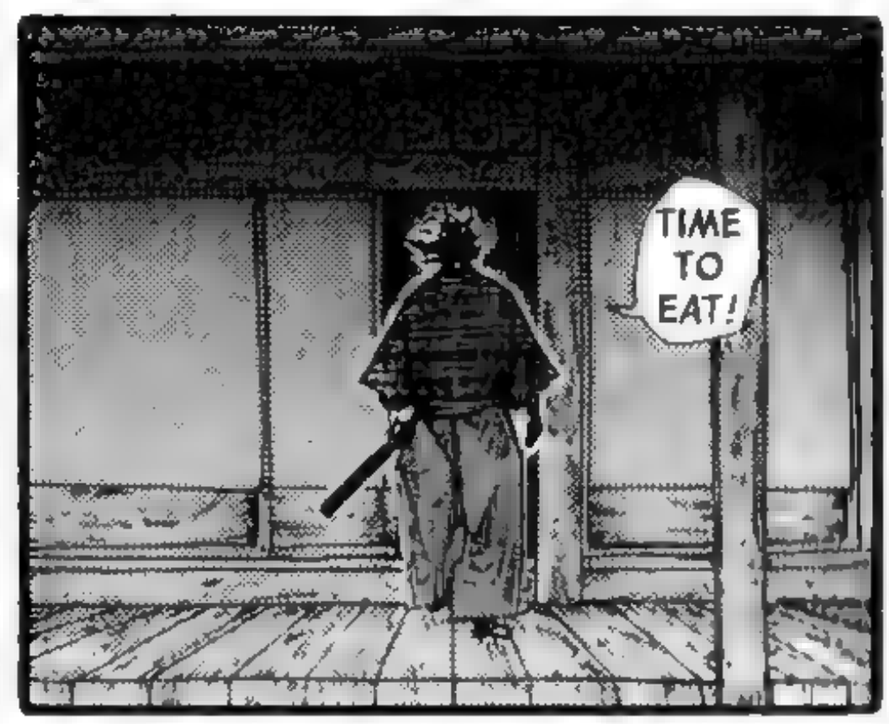
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU SEE?

YOU OLD COOTS...

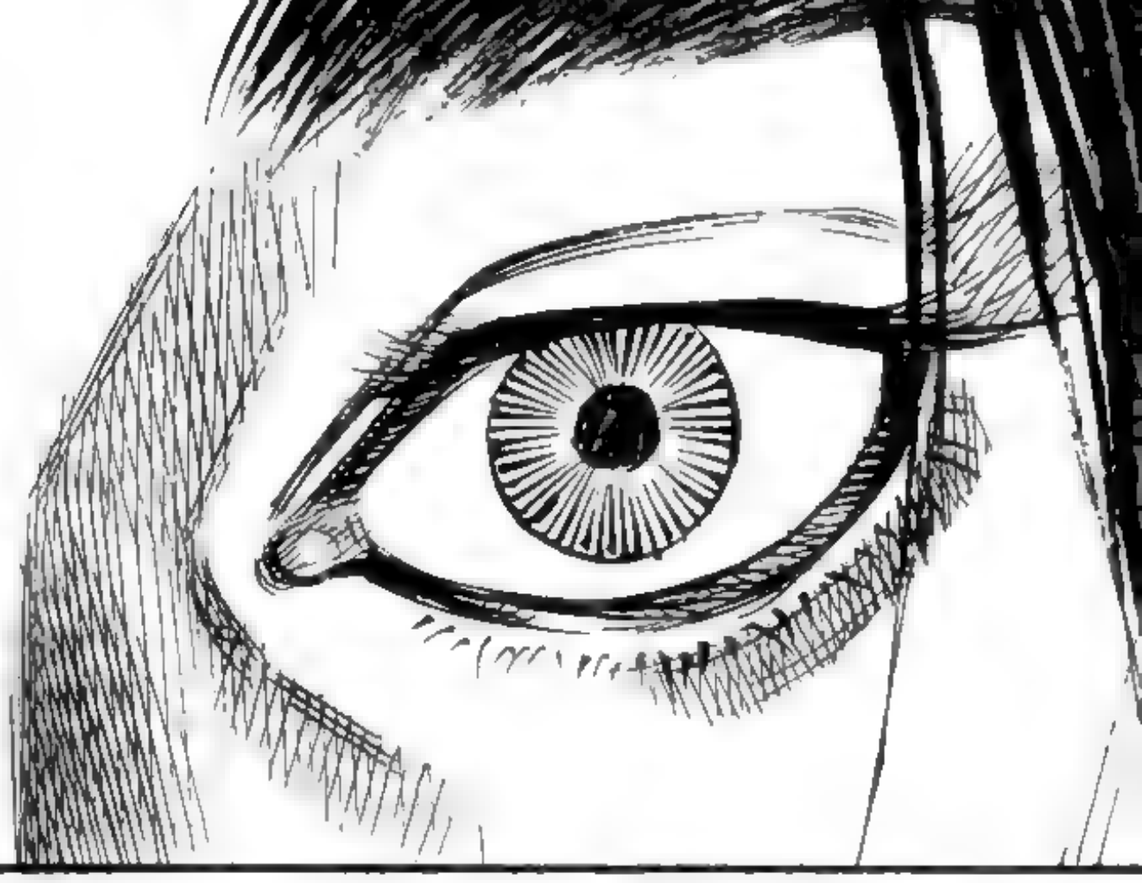
I'LL KEEP
CUTTING DOWN
MEN UNTIL
I FIGURE
IT OUT.

HMPH
THE SPIRAL OF DEATH AND KILLING...
I'M NOT DONE WITH IT YET...


TSUJI-KAZE KŌHEI...


TIME TO EAT!

RRRR



FCH
FCH
FCH

Vagabond

(I DIDN'T LOSE.)

負けてはない

#182 First Snow

FROM

YOU STILL A VIRGIN?

HEY, AKEMI!

YOU'RE GETTING OLDER NOW. IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU FIND A PATRON.

HUH? WHAT WAS THAT?

I CAN'T WASTE HER ON A CUSTOMER LIKE YOU.

OH, NOTHING...

HMPH, SHE MIGHT END UP MARRIED TO THE HEAD OF THE YOSHIOKA FAMILY.

RIGHT, AKEMI?

OKŌ!!

I JUST WORK IN FRONT HERE.

I WANT TO BUY AKEMI!!

COME ON, I'M ONE OF YOUR BEST CUSTOM-ERS.

OH DEAR. I'M SORRY, AKEMI DOES NOT DO THAT TYPE OF THING.

MARRY INTO THE YOSHIOKA FAMILY?

YUK

SIGH

I'M TIRED OF THE OTHERS. SO, AKEMI, ARE YOU STILL A VIRGIN?

WE HAVE PLENTY OF OTHER GIRLS.

COME THIS WAY SHINEMON.

WHAT A LOOK ON YOUR FACE.

ZHOOP

GASP

MOTHER, WHY ARE YOU SO...?

...

HMM...

GOOD EVENING.

SENSEI

YOU'RE LATE.

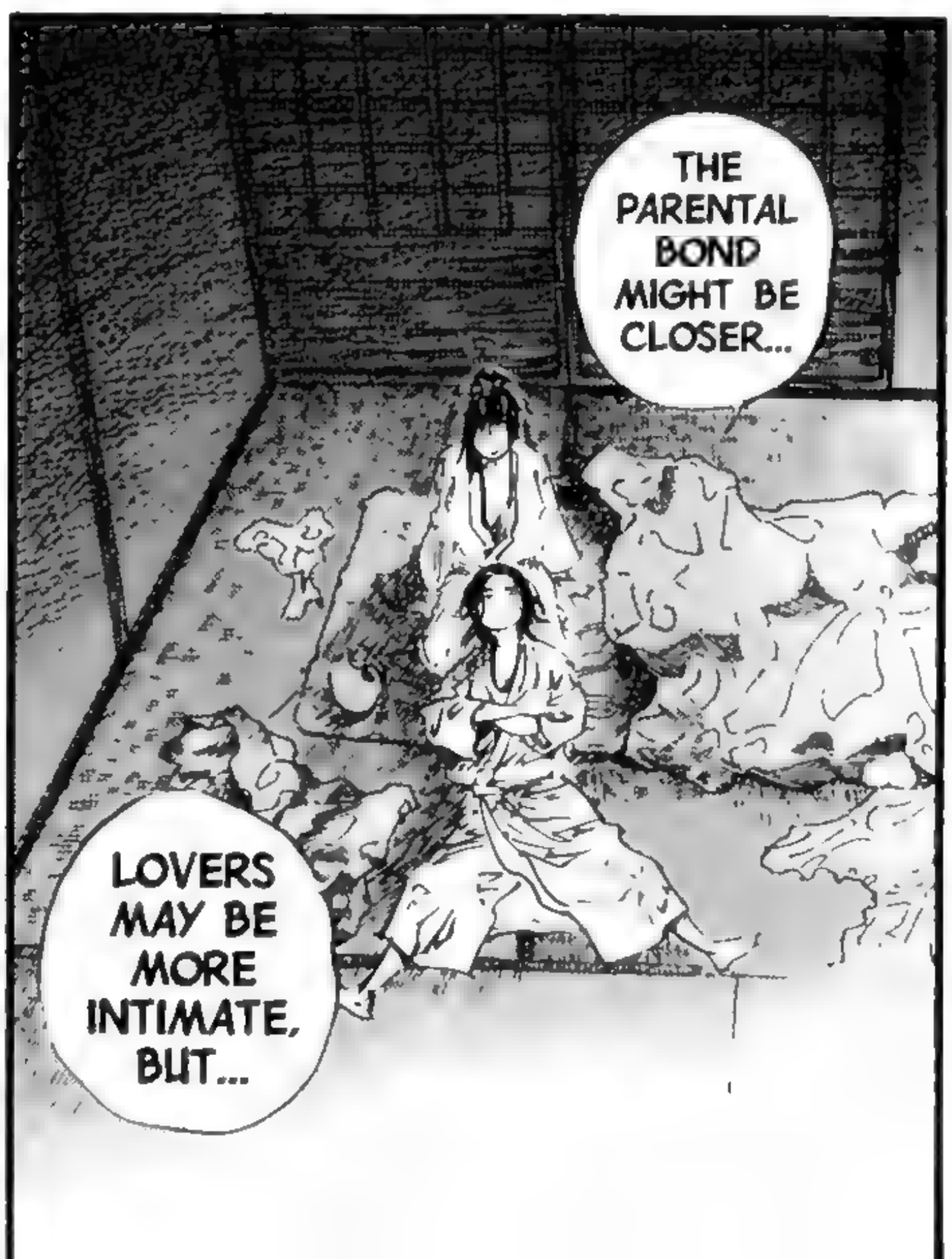
IT'S STARTING TO SNOW.

IT'S OKAY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP QUIET.
AHH.

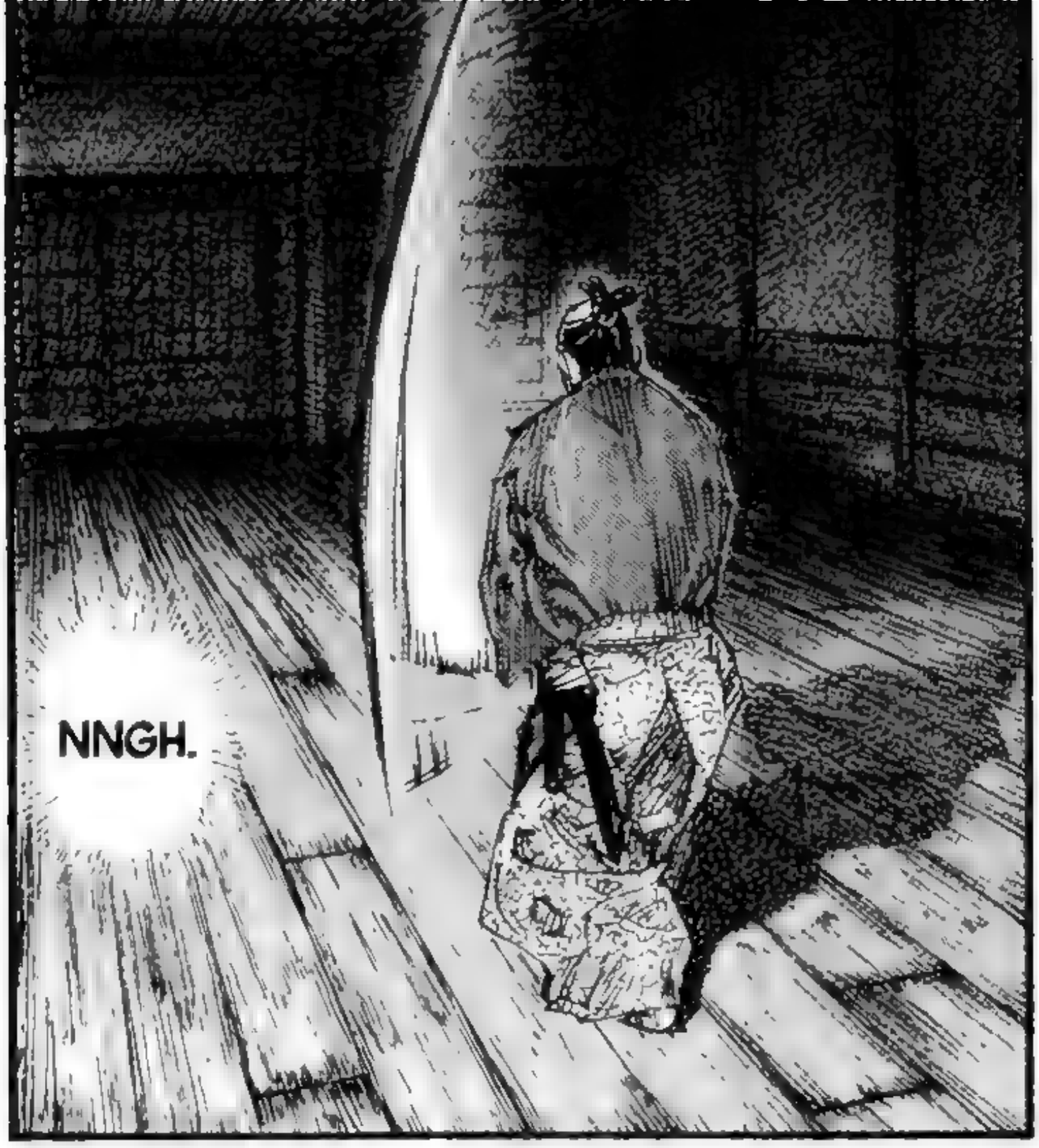
AHH.

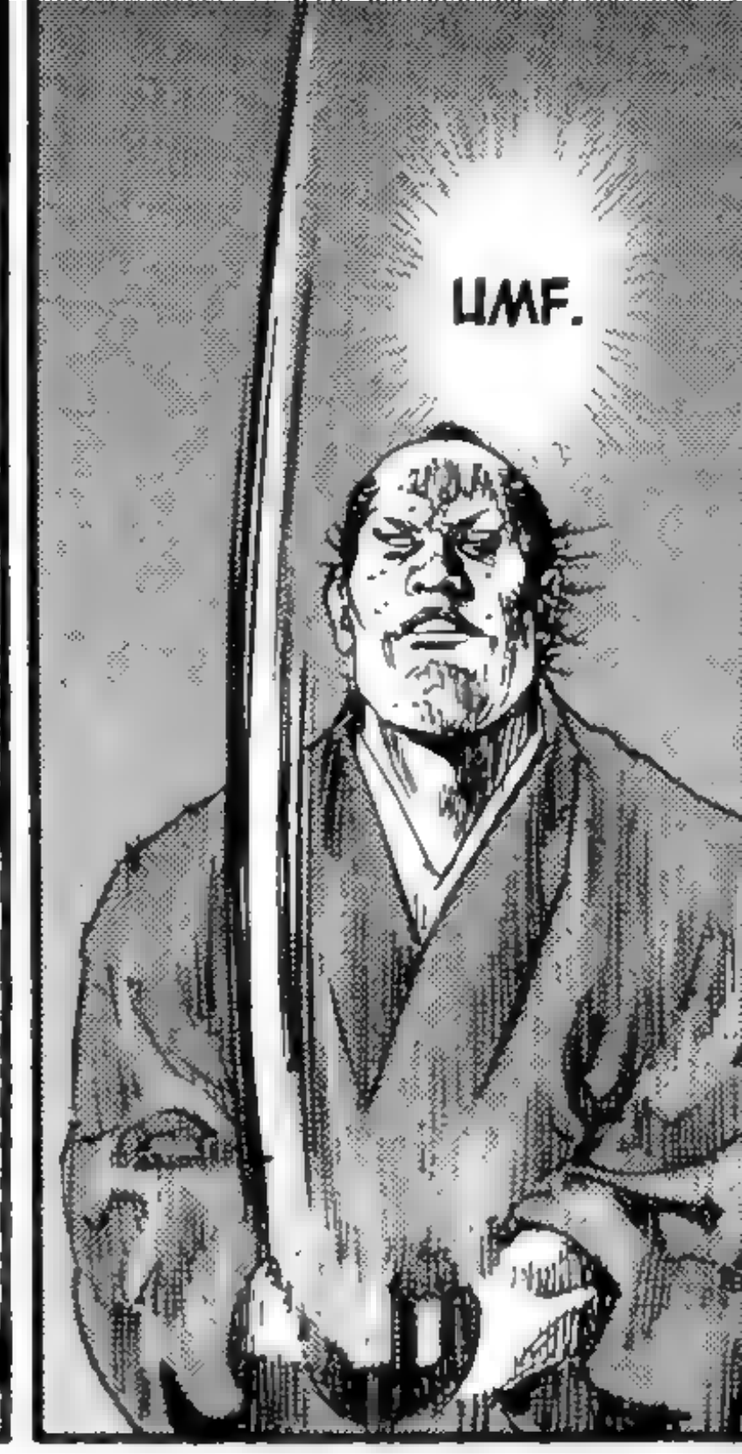
MM...

BROTHERS ARE SO ODD.


THE PARENTAL BOND MIGHT BE CLOSER...
LOVERS MAY BE MORE INTIMATE, BUT...

NNGH.


NNGH.


UMF.

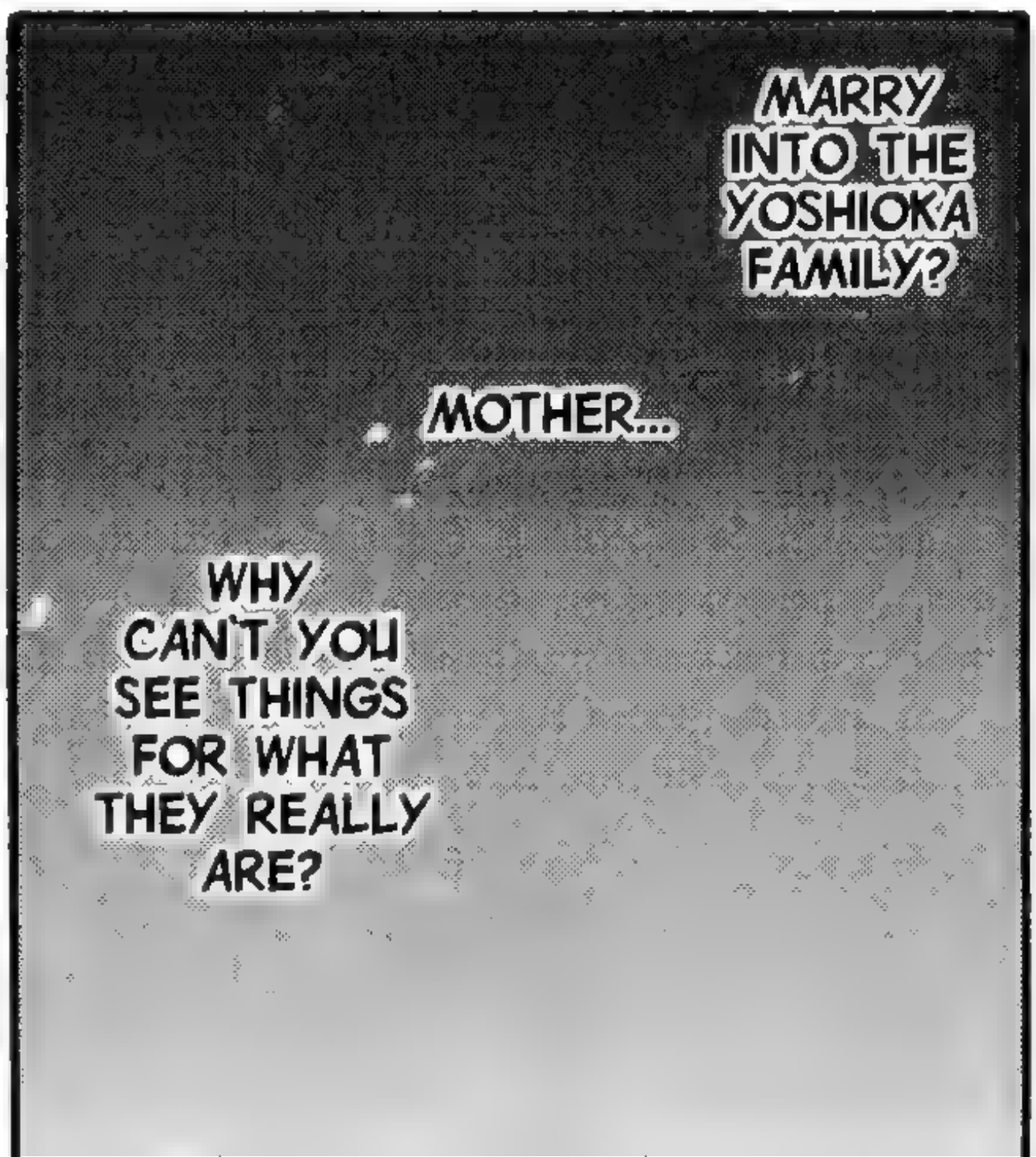
...MY BROTHER'S ARM WAS EVER SLICED OFF...
IF, FOR EXAMPLE...

...I WOULD FEEL THE PAIN JUST AS IF IT WERE MY VERY OWN.

A LITTLE...

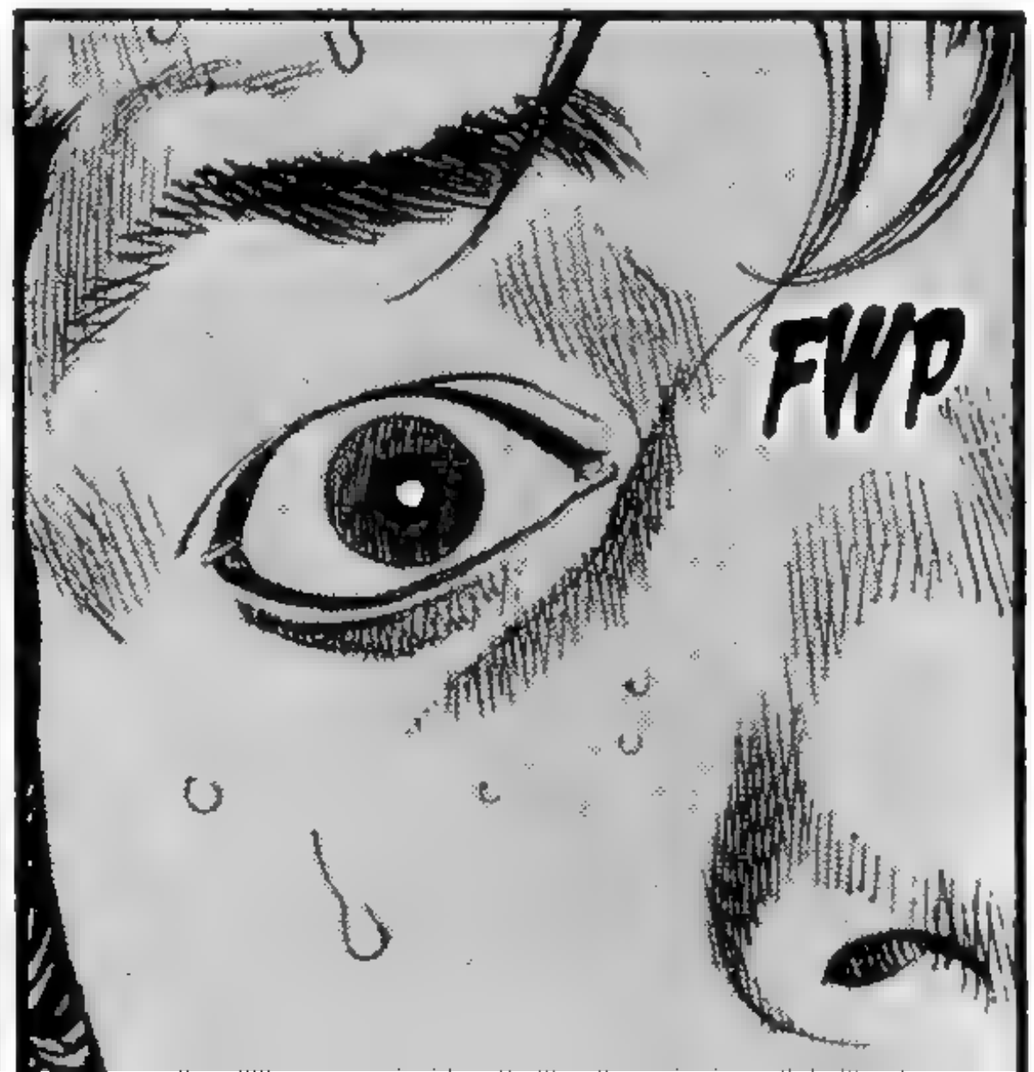
PERHAPS... YOU COULD DROWN HIM WITH YOUR MANY CHARMS. MAKE HIM LOSE HIS EDGE.

AH, FORGET I SAID THAT...


MARRY INTO THE YOSHIOKA FAMILY?
MOTHER...
WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THINGS FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE?

THAT'S RIGHT. HOW COULD HE BE OSUGI'S AT HER AGE?

THE SON OF A MISTRESS ?



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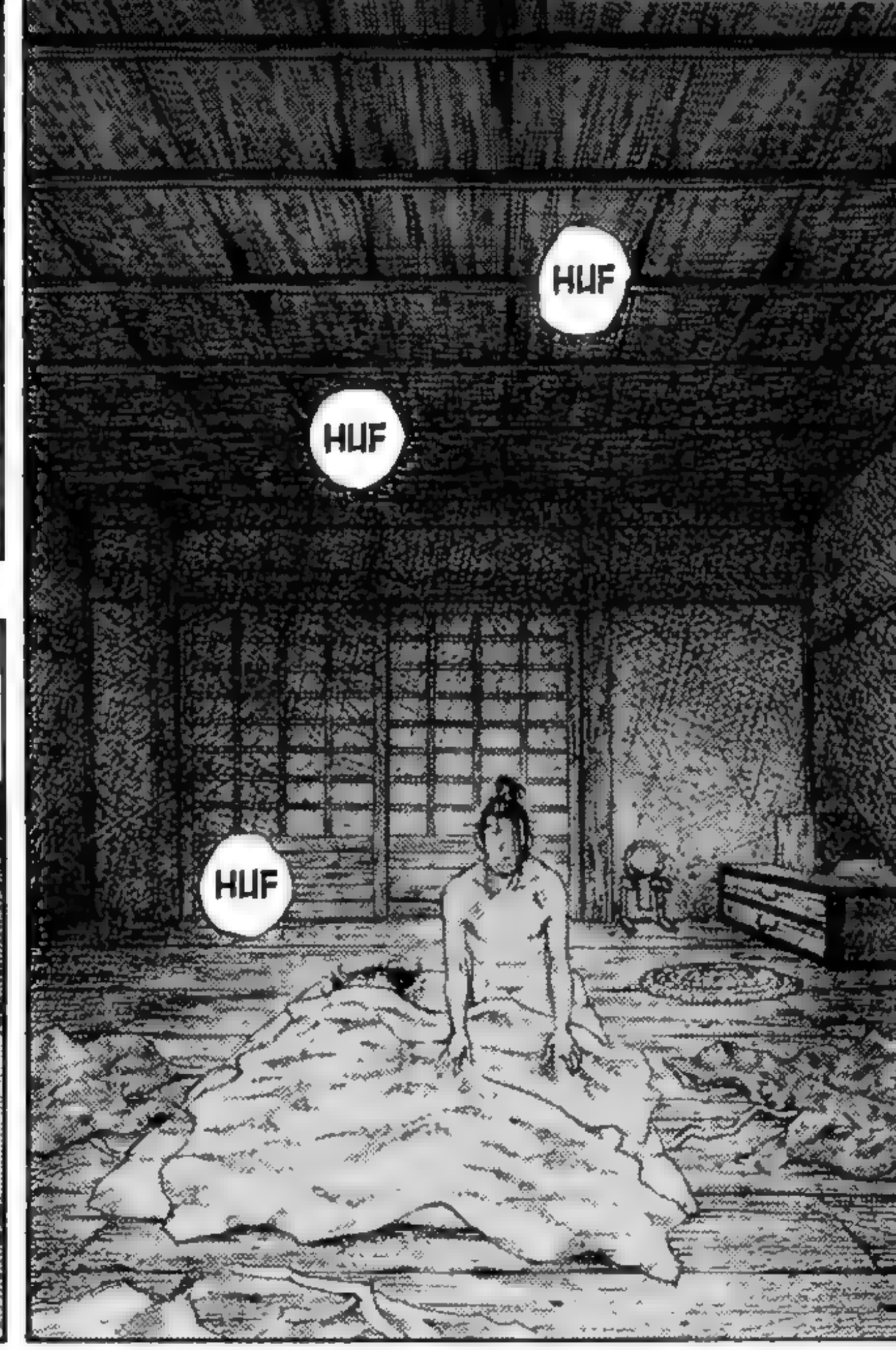
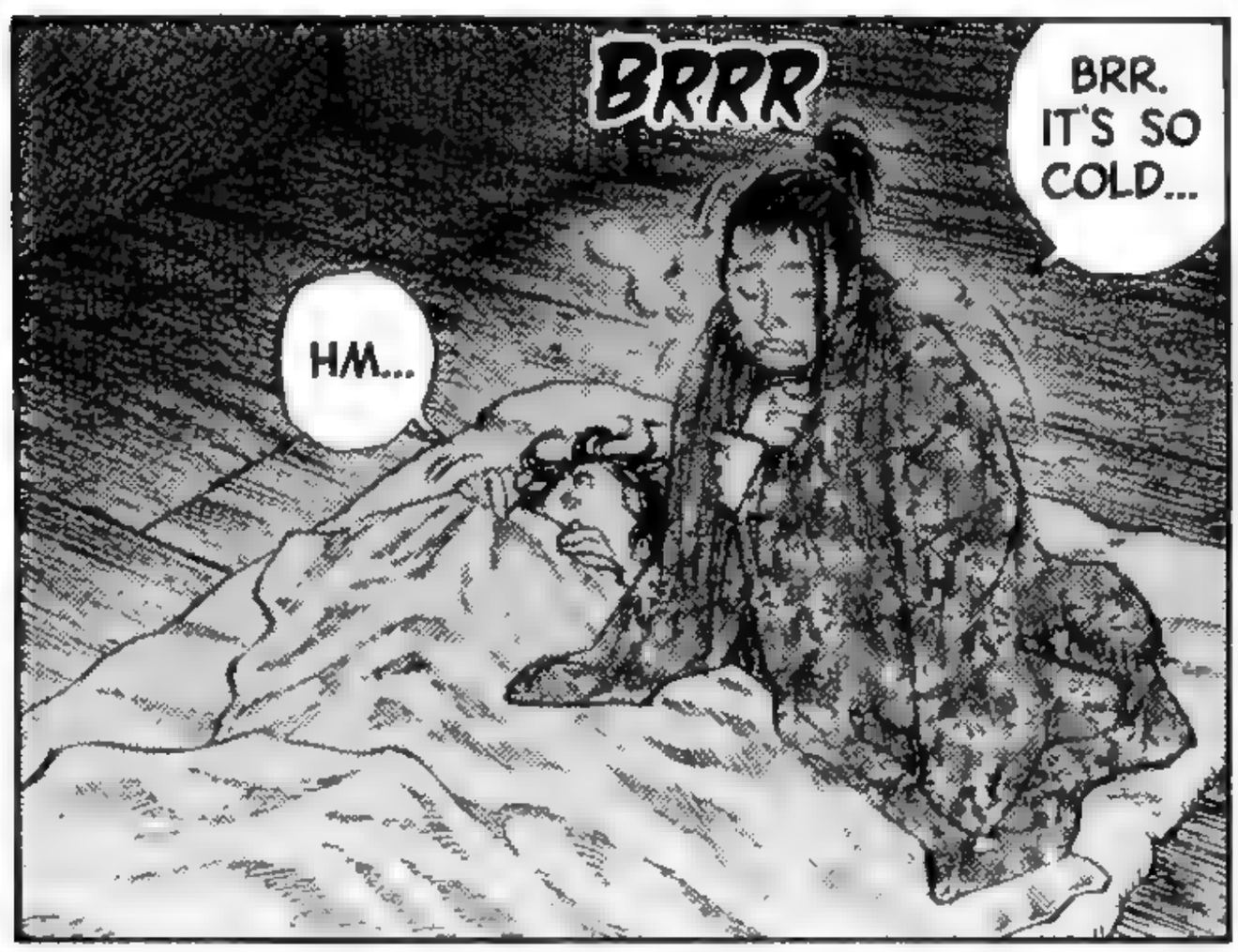

HUF
HUF
HUF


BRRR
BRR. IT'S SO COLD...
HM...

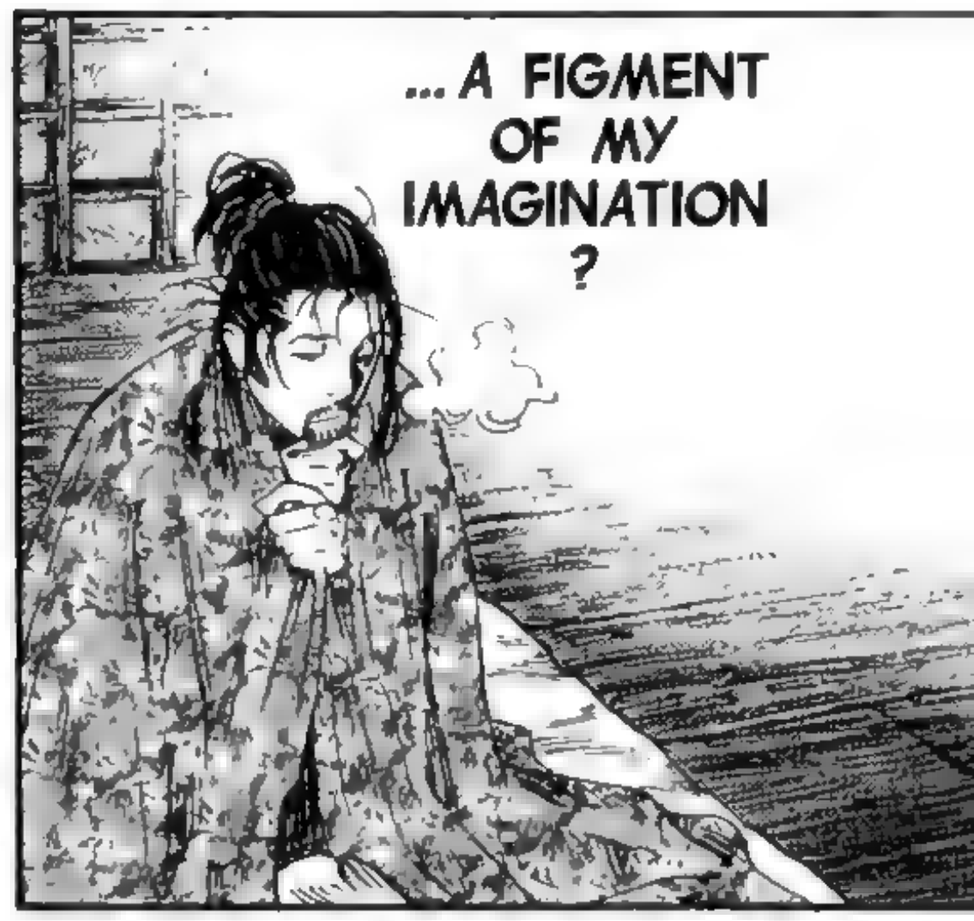
...

SCHNORR
SCHNORR
HOMELY ...
HMPH, IS *THAT* WHAT SHE LOOKED LIKE?

BRRR
BRRR
BRRR
BRRR

OR WAS IT JUST...

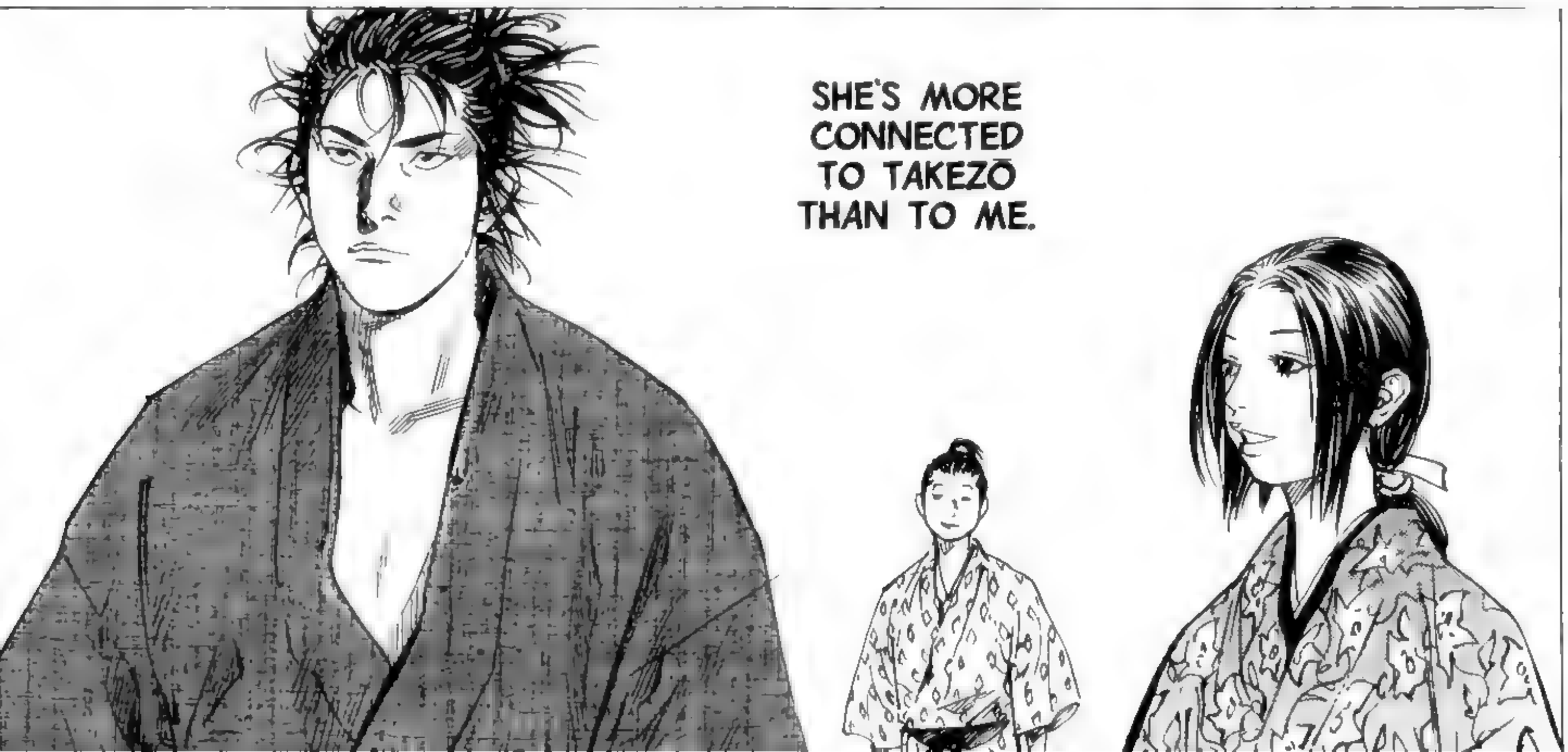
THAT WAS... A CHILDHOOD MEMORY.

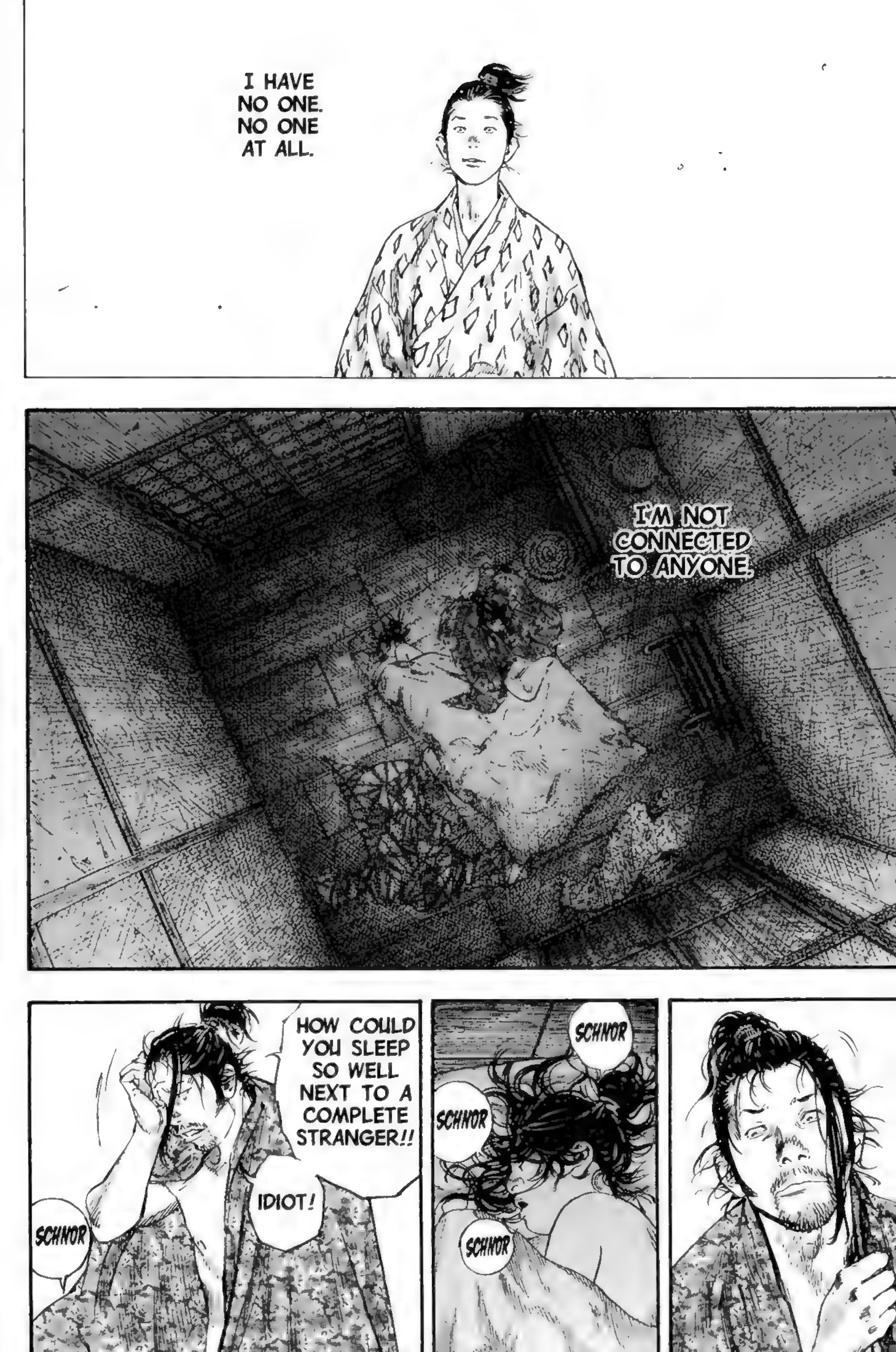


MY CHILDHOOD SWEETHEART AND FIANCÉE...

BUT ACTUALLY...

THE REAL TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS...




I HAVE NO ONE. NO ONE AT ALL.
I'M NOT CONNECTED TO ANYONE.
HOW COULD YOU SLEEP SO WELL NEXT TO A COMPLETE STRANGER!!
SCHNOR
IDIOT!
SCHNOR
SCHNOR
SCHNOR

FWOOSH
I'M OFF TO KYOTO.
BRR, IT'S FREEZ-ING.

SCHNORR
SCHNORR

I WANT SOMEONE WHO KNOWS ME.
THEY CAN PUT ME DOWN. I DON'T CARE. JUST WANT TO TALK TO...
FICH
FICH
FICH
I WANT TO SEE SOMEONE ...
OKŌ, AKEMI, ANYONE WILL DO.

...SOMEONE WHO WON'T CALL ME KOJIRŌ...
SOMEONE WHO KNOWS ME AS MATAHACHI...
URGH.
FWOOSH

...?

SPLISSH
PLISH

PLISH
SPLOSH

PLISH

HE'S THE ONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO FIGHT THE YOSHIOKA.

ISN'T HE COLD?!

ANOTHER GUEST SAID HE'S A FAMOUS SWORDSMAN CALLED MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.

SPLOOSH

OH MY...

IS MIYAMOTO MUSASHI NUMB TO THE COLDNESS OF WINTER?!

SPLISSH

BRR.

SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME...

THIS FEELING I'VE HAD FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS...

SOMEONE'S CHECKING ON ME...

HMM...

ACHOOO!

HE'S COLD.
NO DOUBT.

ACHOOO!
ACHOOO!

HE'S COLD ALL RIGHT.
AHA, SO HE IS COLD.

Vagabond

(IT'S FREEZING.)

#183

The Same Moon

THIS IS SO SUDDEN.
NO...
I'D LIKE TO PAY MY BILL.
DID WE DISPLEASE YOU?

WHAT? YOU'RE LEAVING?
RIGHT NOW?
YES.

COULD YOU PACK ME SOME RICE BALLS FOR THE ROAD?
THANKS.

BRR
IT'S SO COLD.

.....

YOU MUST TAKE THESE WITH YOU.
UH, SIR...

.....

THANK YOU.

HM?
YIKES
THEY'RE SO CREEPY.

FWOOOSH-

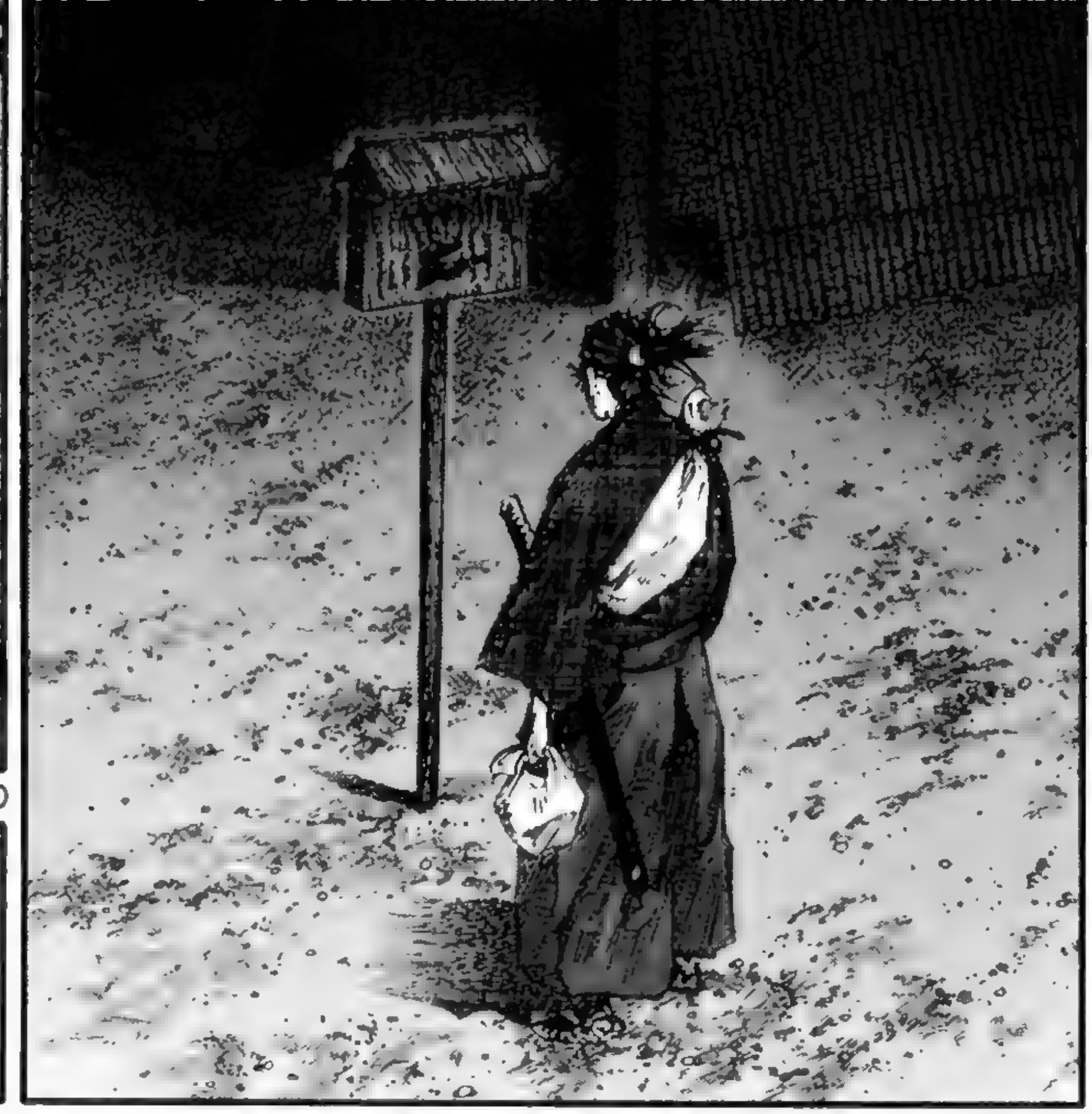
IT'S FREEZING COLD OUT HERE.
LET'S GO INSIDE.

THAT MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS SUCH AN ODD FELLOW...
WHY DOES HE HAVE TO LEAVE ON NEW YEAR'S EVE?

FICH
FICH

.....
FWOOOOSH
FICH
FICH

(YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ)



TWEE

LA LA

.....

MUSTN'T GET PRE-OCCUPIED...

HAAA...

BRRR

...

FICH

FICH

PREOCCUPIED.

FICH

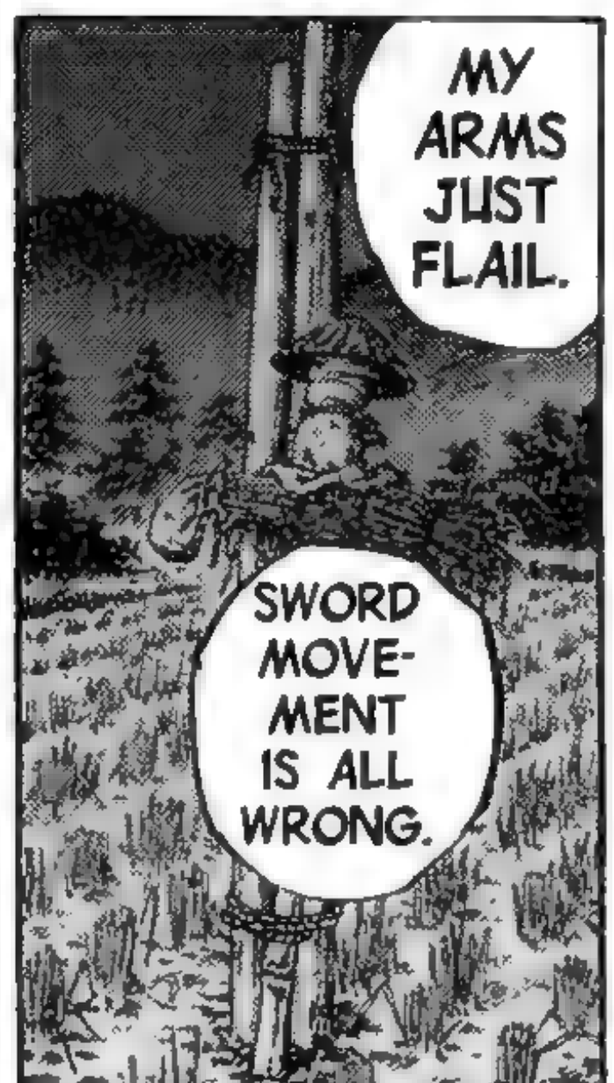
FICH

.....

FSH

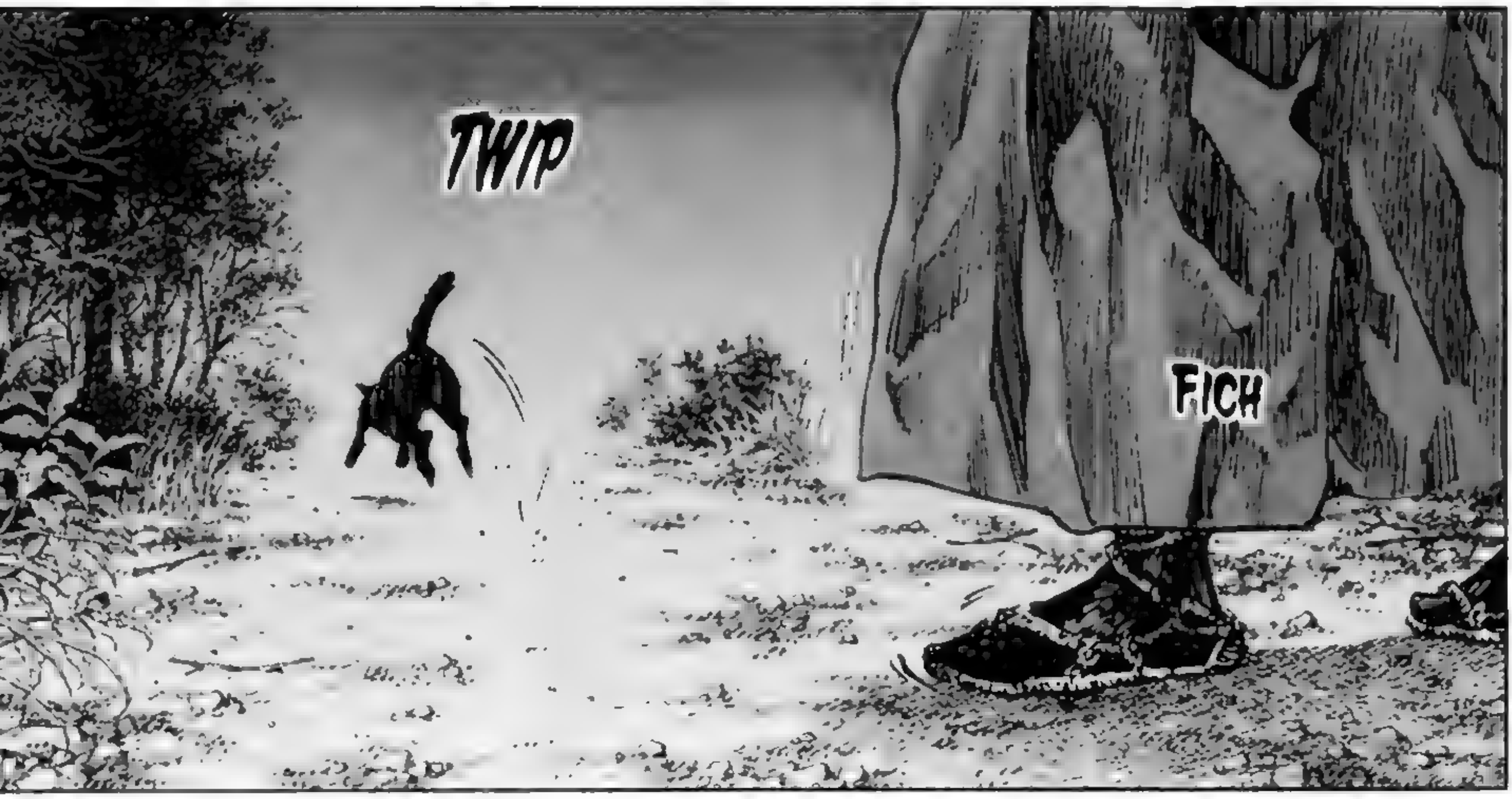
FHISSH

FHISSH



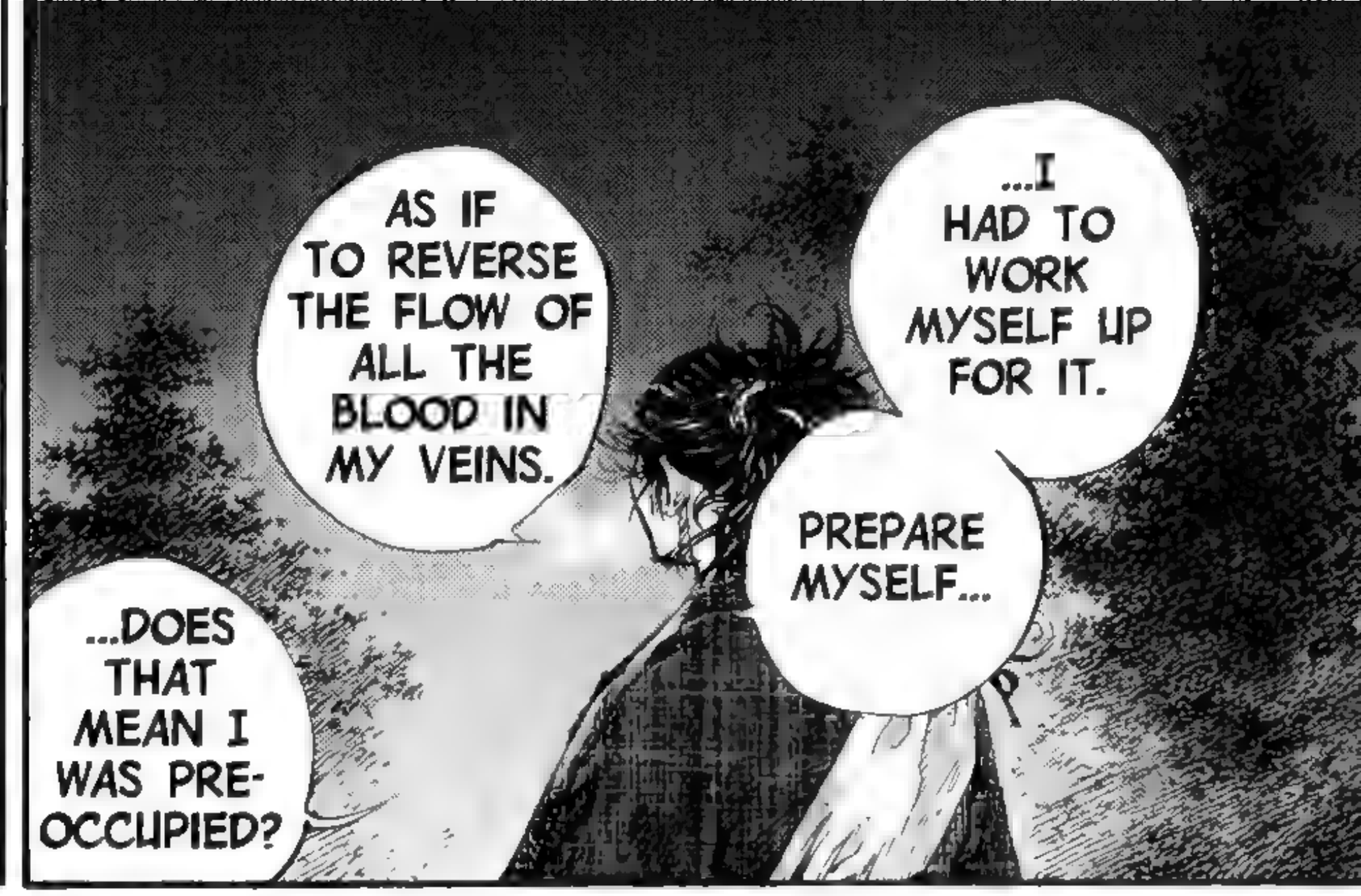
TWK

TWK


TWIP
FICH

EVERY TIME I SOUGHT OUT A MATCH...

HMPH.


AS IF TO REVERSE THE FLOW OF ALL THE BLOOD IN MY VEINS.
...I HAD TO WORK MYSELF UP FOR IT.
PREPARE MYSELF...
...DOES THAT MEAN I WAS PRE-OCCUPIED?

I'VE BEEN DOING SOMETHING WRONG.

THIS LIFE OF CUTTING DOWN MEN...
FIGHTING IN THE DARK...
STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL... IS THAT ALL IT IS?

YOU OLD COOTS.

YOU'D GROW WEARY OF IT ALL.

YOU COULDN'T LAST...

AND THEN YOU'D JUST BE CUT DOWN BY SOME UNWORTHY WRETCH.

THAT CAN'T BE RIGHT.

SURVIVE FIGHT AFTER FIGHT BY CHANCE...

IS THAT THE POINT OF IT ALL?

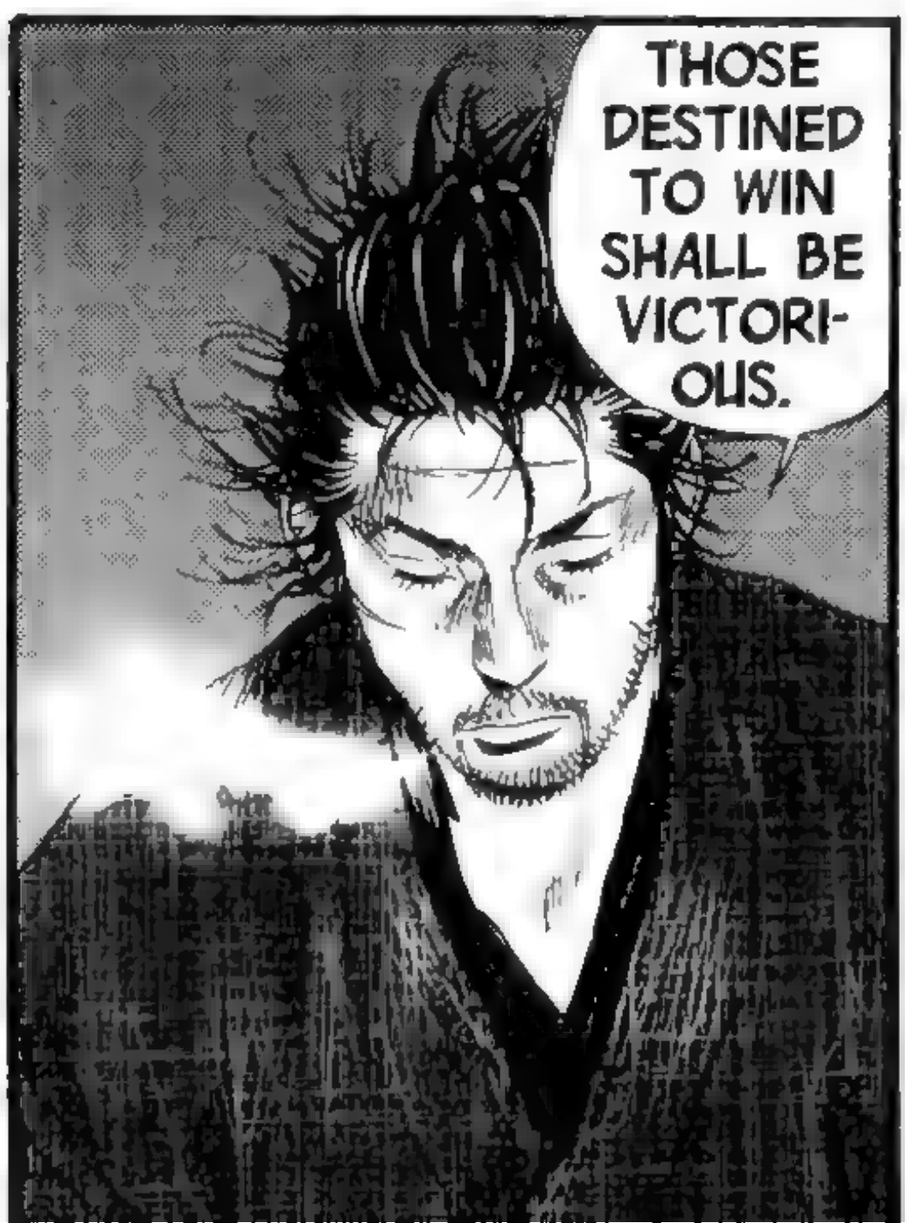
BUT THAT WOULD MEAN MY SWORD HAS BEEN UNTRUE.

DON'T GET PREOCCUPIED.

HUF

KRAK

NO MATTER WHO THE OPPON-ENT...
NO MATTER WHERE THE PLACE.


THOSE DESTINED TO WIN SHALL BE VICTORI-OUS.

KKRL
KKRL

HAAH

ONE CONTINUES TO CUT MEN DOWN TO REACH THAT STATE.

THOSE WHO DESERVE TO WIN...

...WILL WIN.

IF I'VE ALREADY WON BEFORE A FIGHT EVEN BEGINS...

HMM ...?

THEN...

.....

I MUST REACH THAT PLATEAU, AND THEN...

HARUMPH

...?

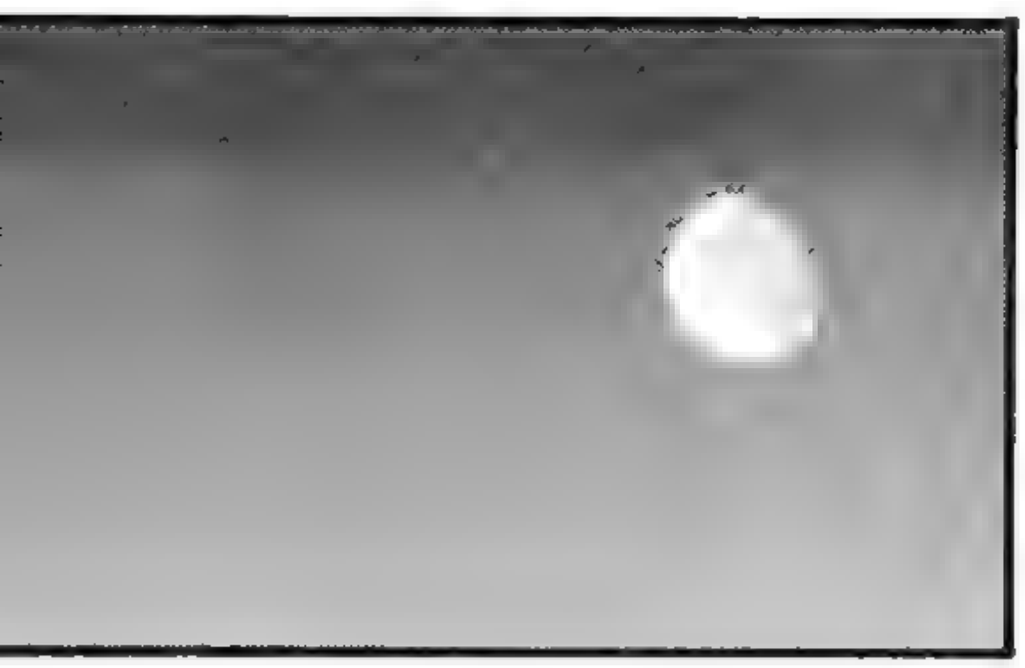
THEN IS IT EVEN NECESSARY TO FIGHT?

BONG
BONG

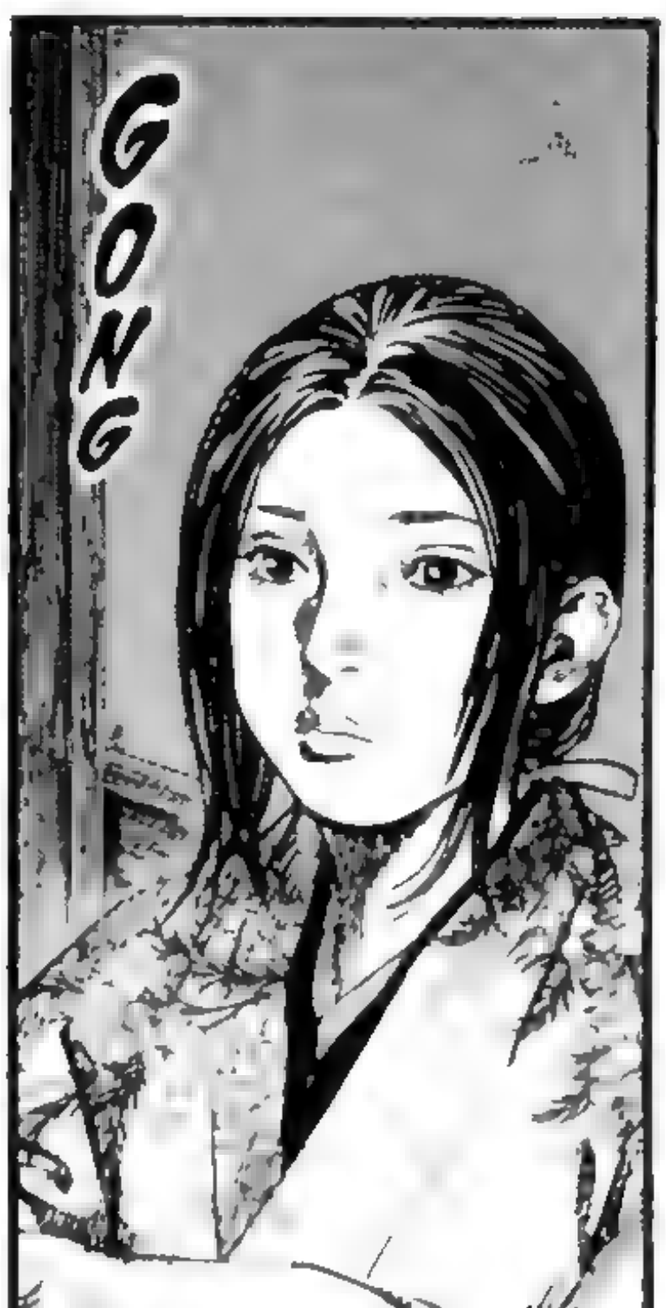
THE NEW YEAR.
IT'S THE NEW YEAR.
GONG
HMM ...
HOW FORTUNATE.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE LAST CELEBRATED THE NEW YEAR TOGETHER!
GONG
GONG
SHE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

DAMN IT...
GONG

WHAT AM I DOING?

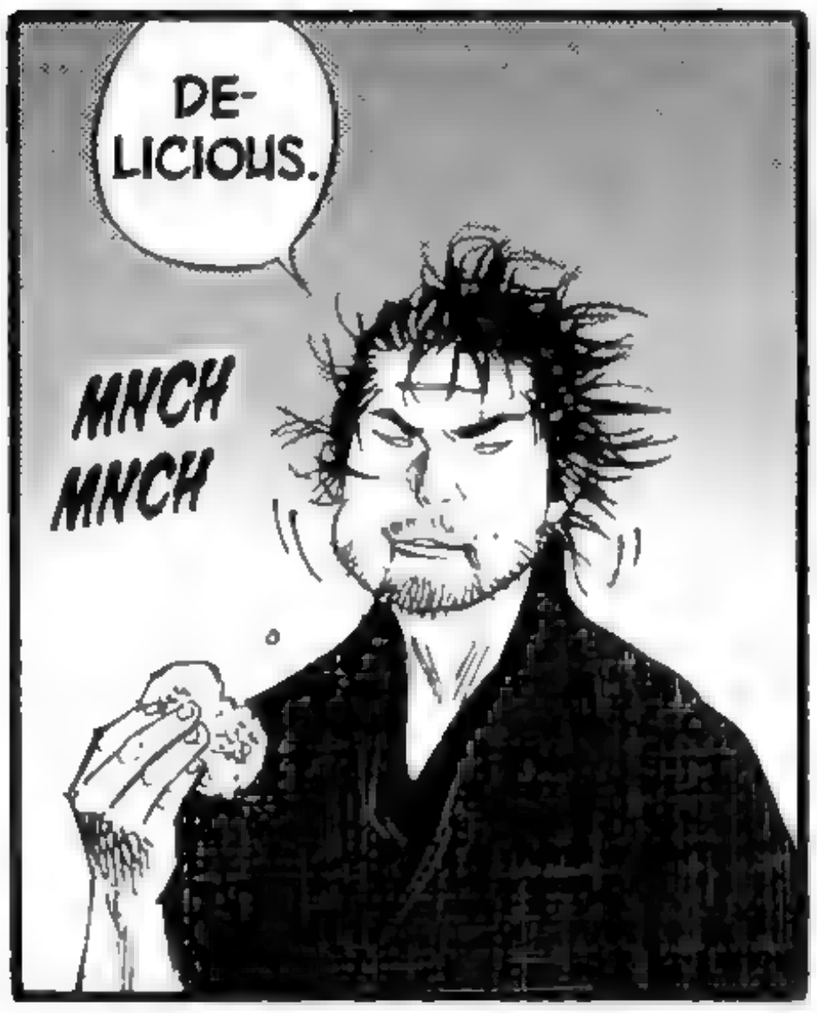


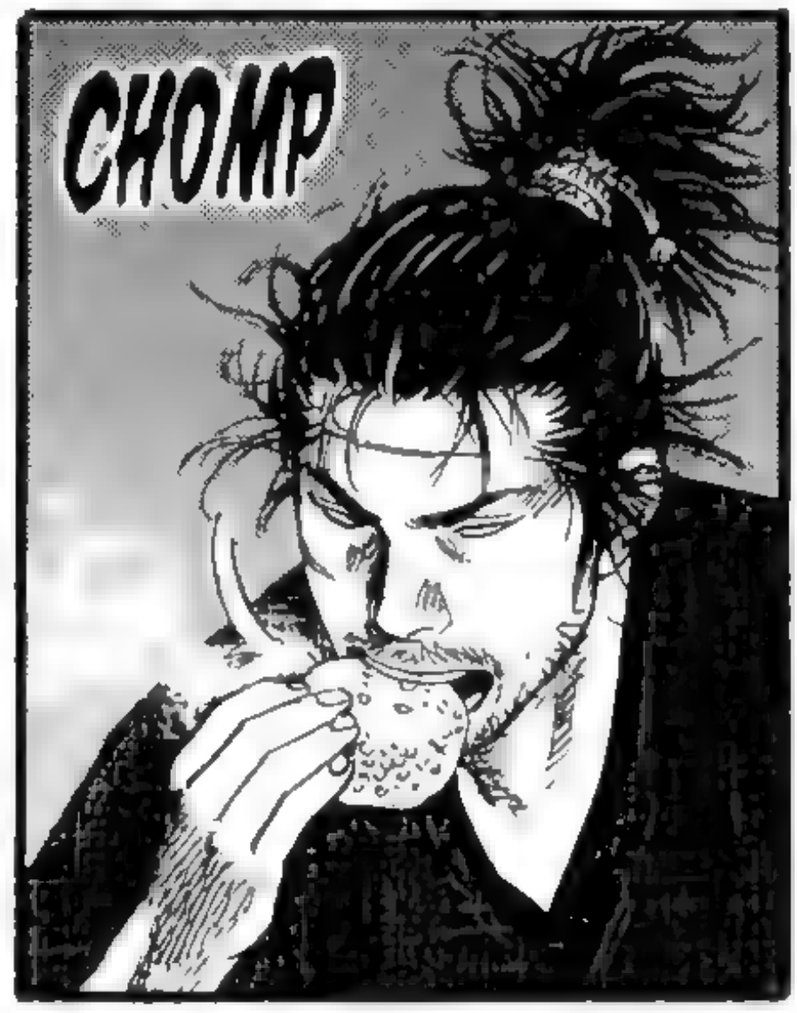
GONG


GONG

THE BELLS OF NEW YEAR'S EVE, OTSU.
GONG

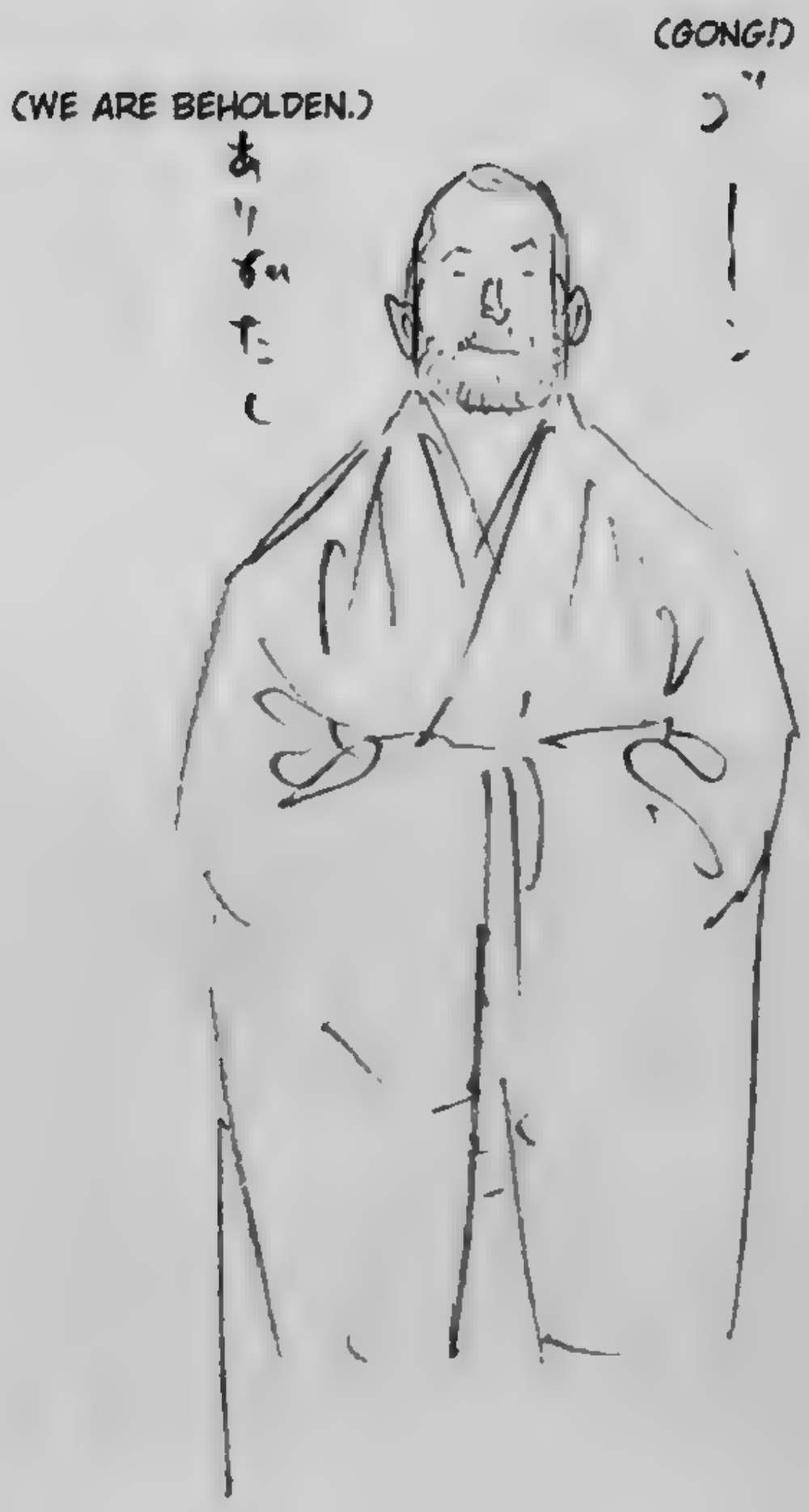
I WANT TO DIE.





GONG

Vagabond

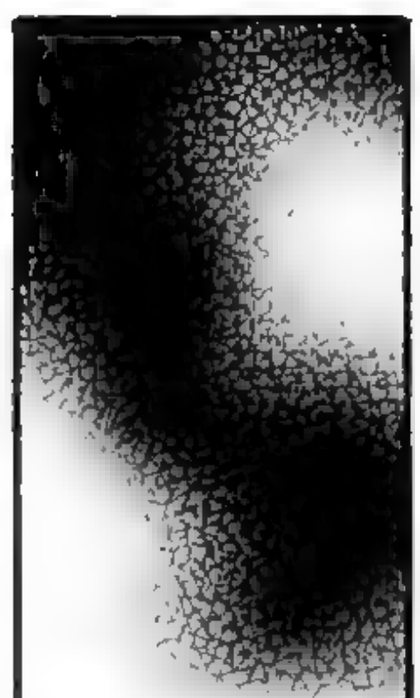

(WE ARE BEHOLDEN.)
(GONG!)

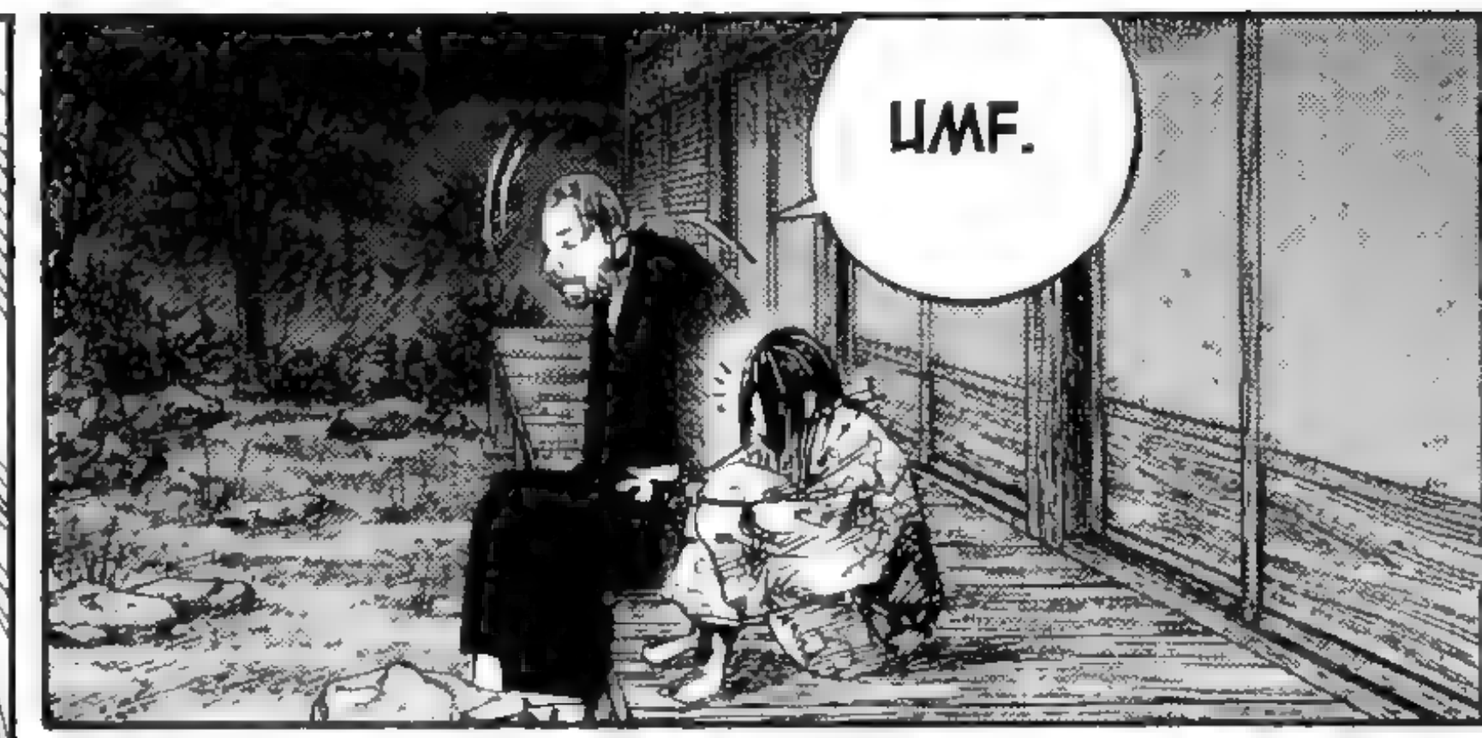
#184

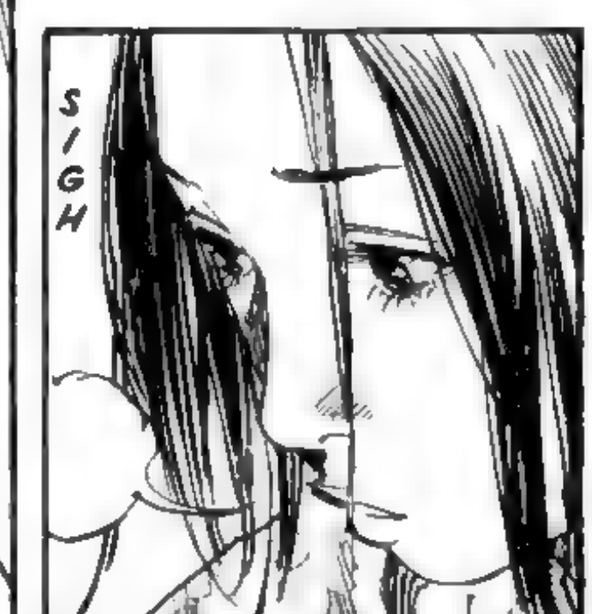
Eagle and Ant

GONG

THAT'S SO UNLIKE YOU.
YOU WANT TO DIE? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, OTSŪ?




UMF.


SIGH

IT'S FREEZ-ING.
...

KILL...

KILL OTSŪ...

.....

KILL OTSŪ AND THAT BASTARD MUSASHI...

KILL...

ONLY AFTER THAT SHOULD THEY BE KILLED... NNGH. HOFF HOFF

BUT FIRST, THEY HAVE TO SUFFER...

HUF HUF

KILL THEM...

TEAR 'EM APART...

KILL THEM.

ARR...
URR...?
HOW DARE YOU?!
GASP ...
WHAT?!
WHAT DID I EVER DO TO YOU?!

GASP! STOP IT!!

WHY BRING TAKEZŌ INTO THIS?!

WHY...

IT WAS *YOUR* SON WHO BETRAYED *ME!!*

URR...

HE BETRAYED *ME!!*

URR...

HUH?
FICH

HURRY!
THEY'LL CATCH US.

HURRY.

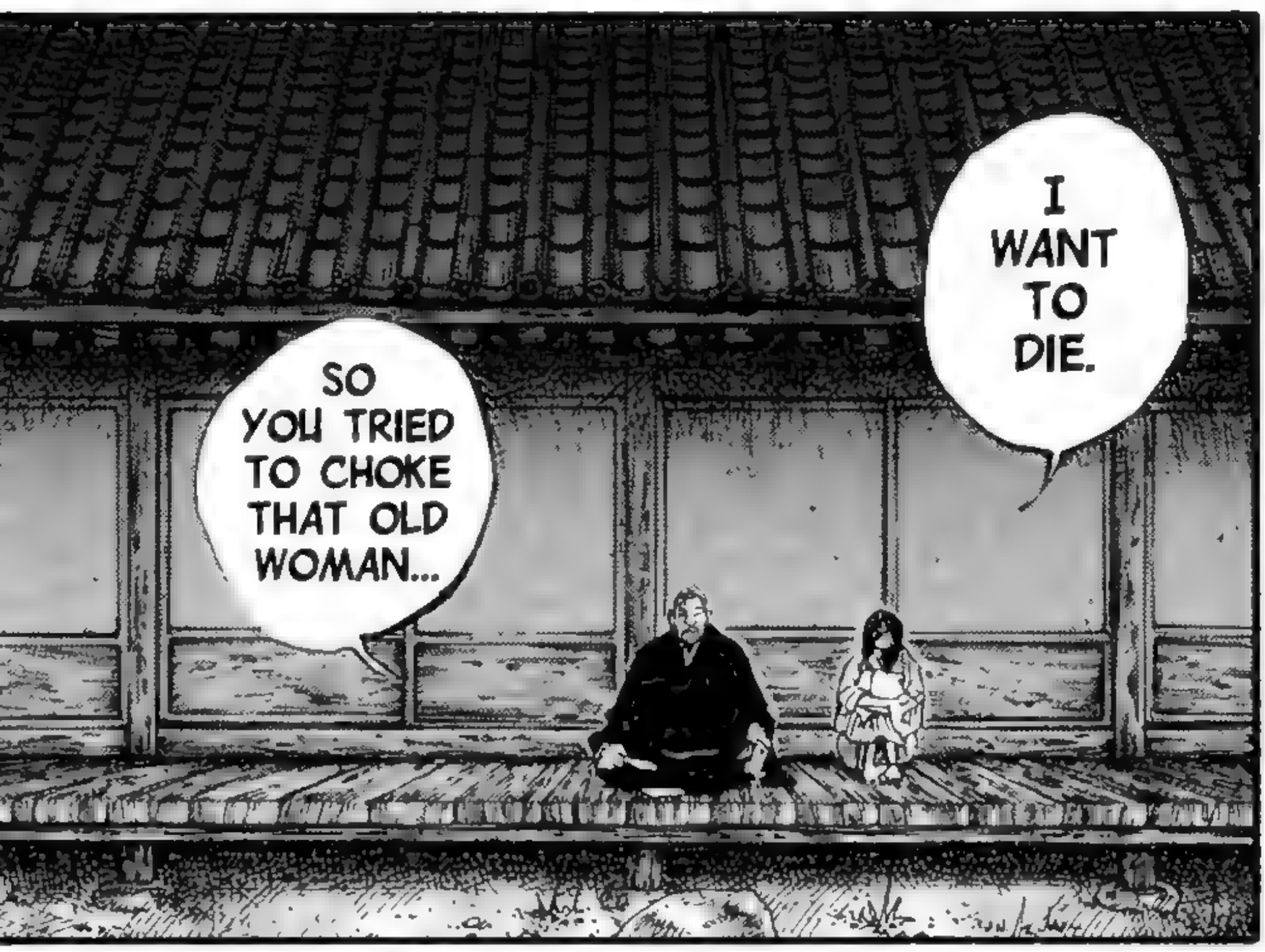
...BUT I FIGURED WE'D MEET AGAIN SOON ENOUGH.
WE MISSED EACH OTHER AT THE YAGYŪ CLAN...

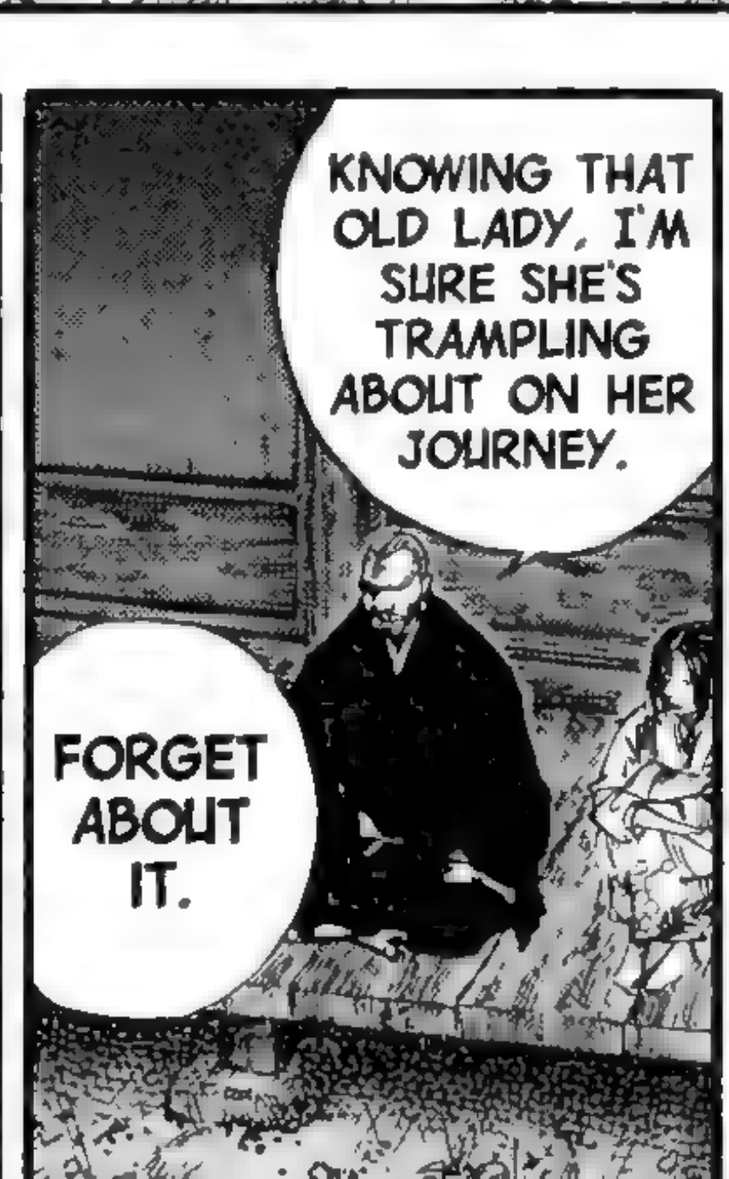
HMM?
SWK

YOU WERE WITH MY MASTER!
IT'S YOU!!
RIGHT ?!

OTSU, YOU LOOK AN AWFUL LOT LIKE MUSASHI RIGHT NOW.

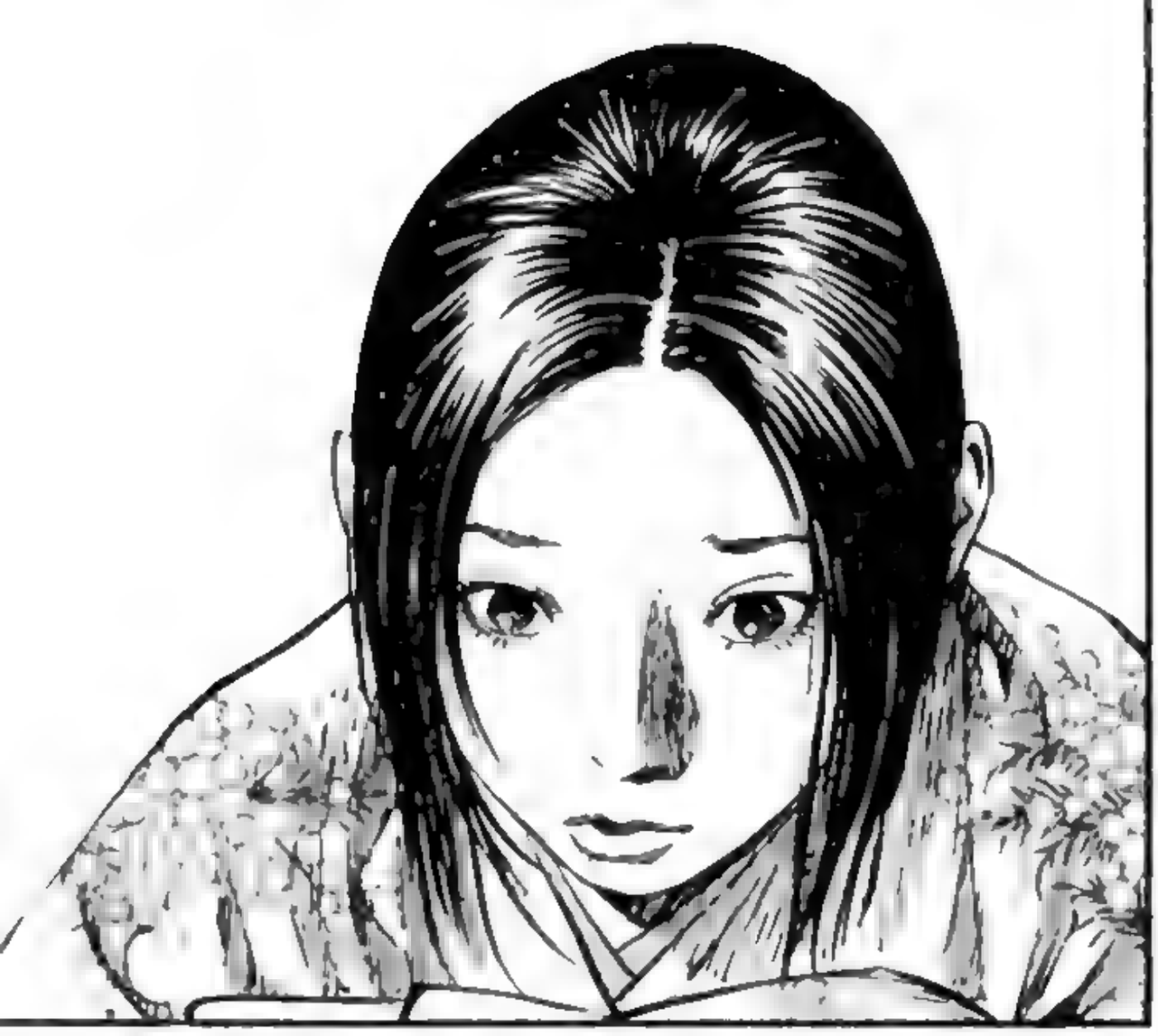
HUFF



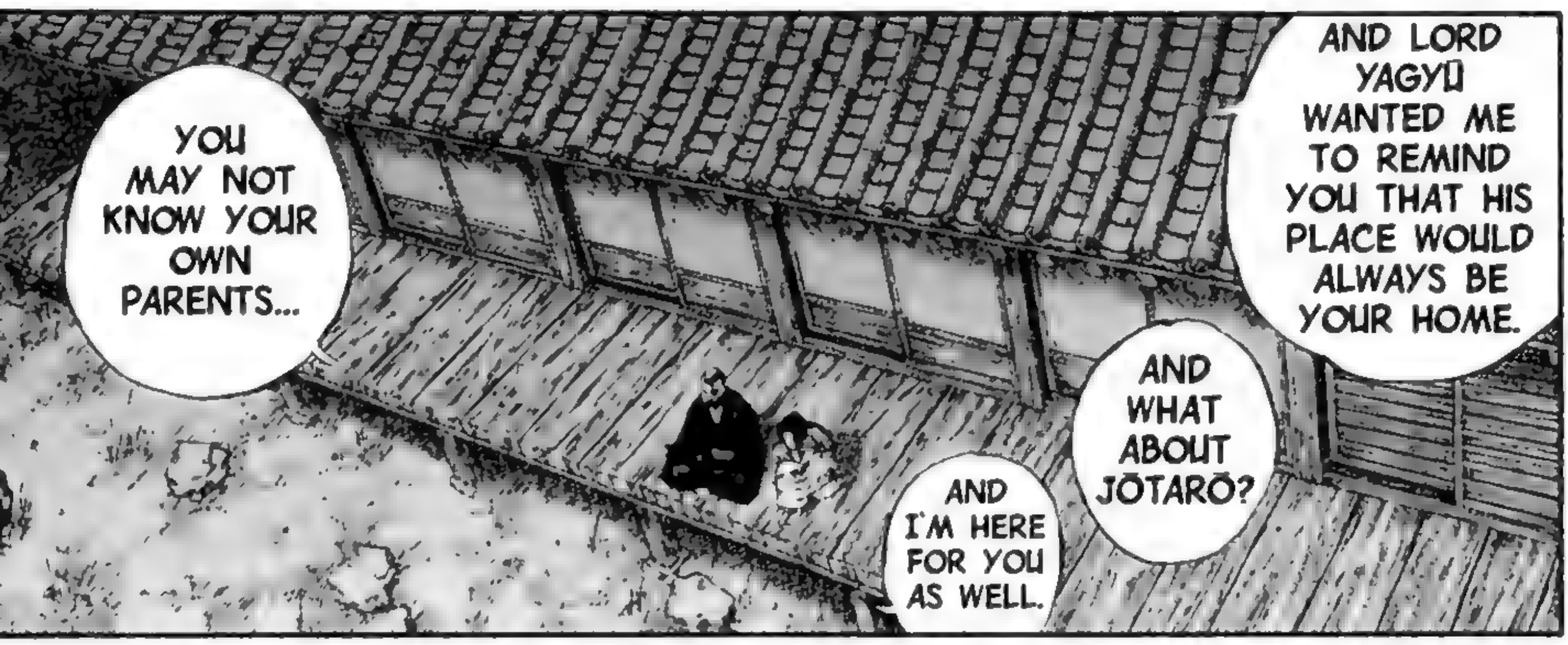


WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE ANYBODY, SHE PROVIDED ME WITH A FAMILY.

BUT...

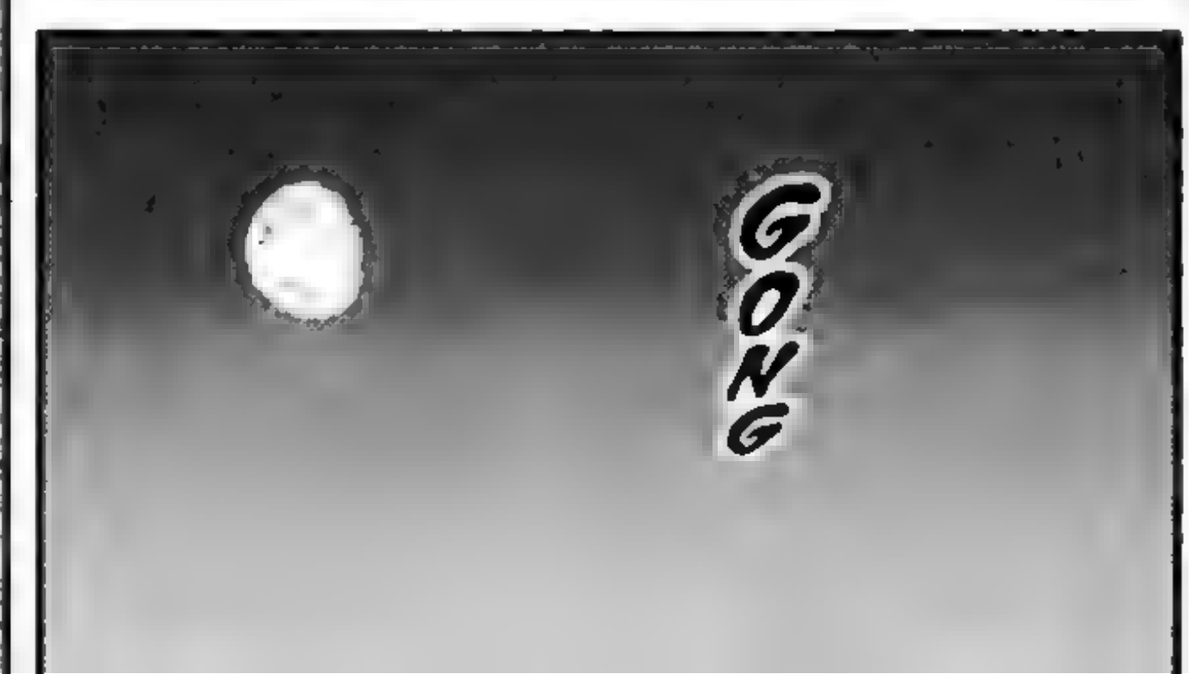


YOU STILL HAVE MUSASHI.


YOU MAY NOT KNOW YOUR OWN PARENTS...
AND LORD YAGYŪ WANTED ME TO REMIND YOU THAT HIS PLACE WOULD ALWAYS BE YOUR HOME.
AND WHAT ABOUT JŌTARŌ?
AND I'M HERE FOR YOU AS WELL.

RUMOR HAS IT THAT HE'S LOOKING TO FIGHT THE YOSHIOKA IN KYOTO.
MUSASHI'S LIGHT IS FLICKERING LIKE A CANDLE IN THE WIND...
AND...
WHAT ?!

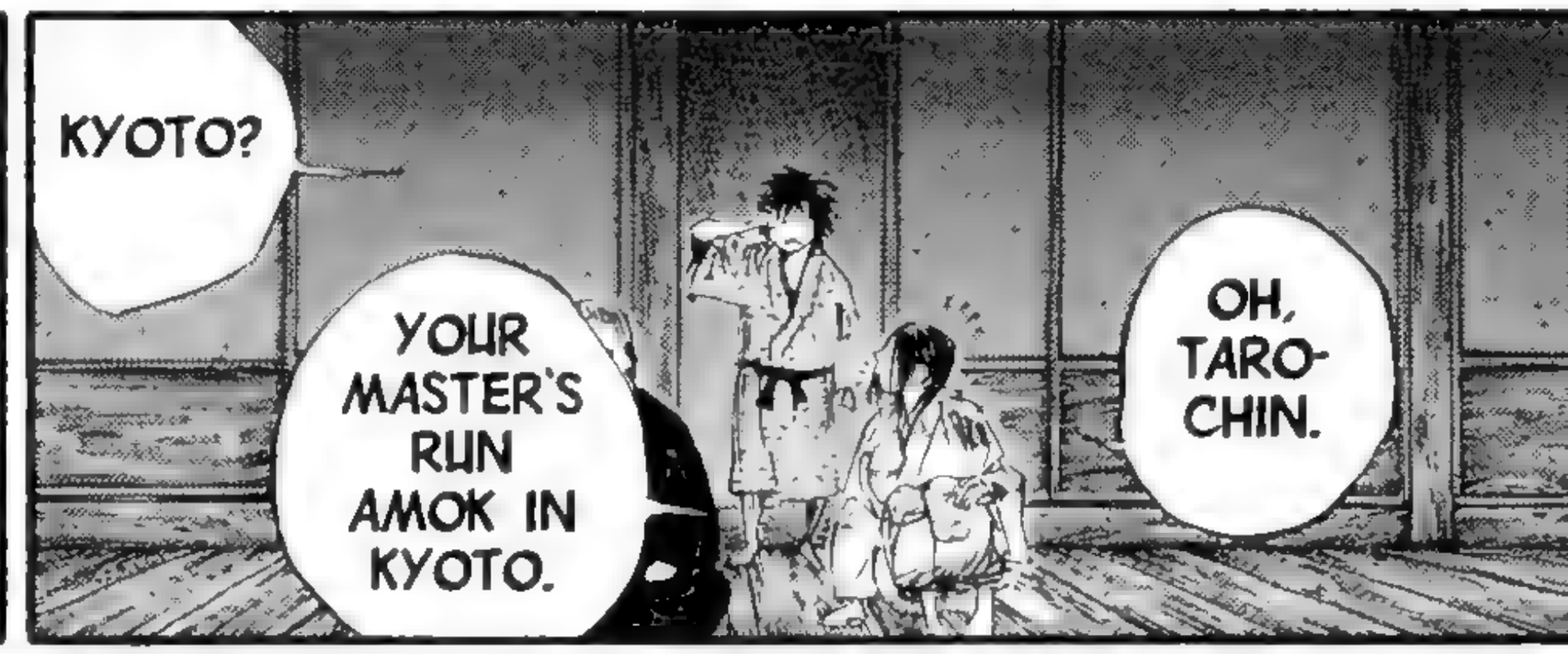
...BUT MAINTAIN-ING YOUR BONDS WITH OTHERS IS A PART OF LIFE.
HMM... I'M BEGINNING TO SOUND LIKE A MONK.

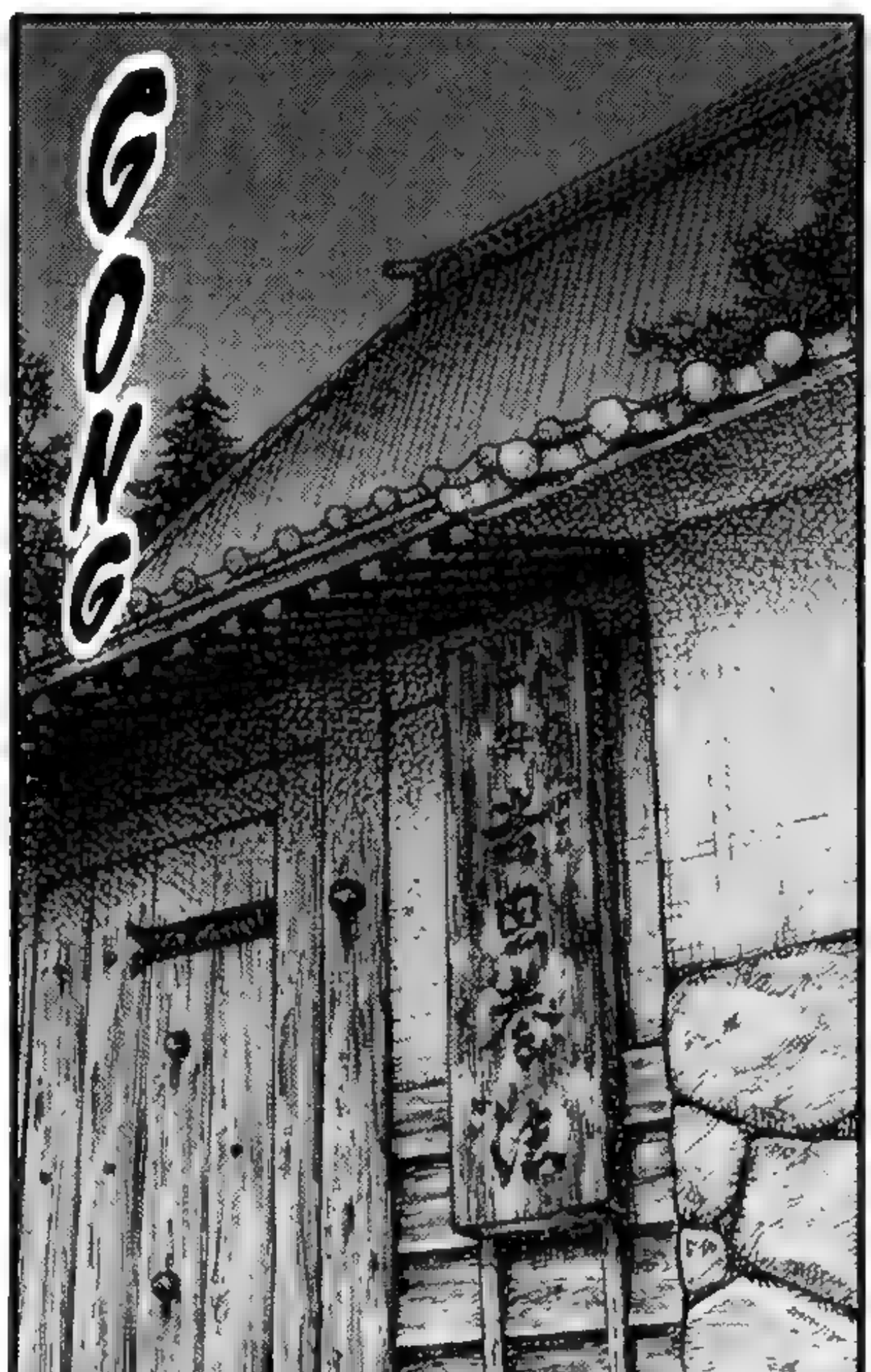

GONG

ZHOOP
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT MY MASTER.

R R R
HE'S BEING RECKLESS AGAIN?!

...
RUB
RUB


KYOTO?
YOUR MASTER'S RUN AMOK IN KYOTO.
OH, TARO-CHIN.


GONG

YOU'RE STILL HALF ASLEEP.
THEN LET'S GO TO KYOTO!
COME ON.
WE'RE GOING!

LET'S GO TO KYOTO!

AS IS OUR TRADITION ...
...WE GREET THE COMING OF THE NEW YEAR WITH A TRAINING SESSION.
YES, SIR!!

THE TEN SWORDSMEN OF THE YOSHIOKA!!

WE DEDICATE THIS NEW YEAR'S TRAINING SESSION TO YOU!!

DENSHICHIRŌ !!

WHAT'S THAT, ŌTAGURO ?

...UNTIL THE DAY OF YOUR MATCH AGAINST MIYAMOTO MUSASHI!!

WE SHALL BE TRAINING WITH YOU...

ŌTAGURO HYŌSUKE!!

MIIKE JŪRŌZAEMON !!

NANPŌ YOICHIBE !!

KOBASHI KURANDO !!

I'M AN-OTHER GUY!

I'M THE OTHER GUY!

SO-AND-SO-HERE!

WE ALL KNOW EACH OTHER, THERE'S NO NEED TO ANNOUNCE OURSELVES...

THIS IS EMBARRASSING.

GION TŌJI IS STILL MISSING...

BUT THE REST OF US, THE TEN SWORDS OF THE YOSHIOKA, SHALL SERVE AS YOUR TRAINING OPPONENTS!!

AHEM

.....

AND OUR NUMBER ONE, UEDA RYŌHEI!!

...TRULY MOVES ME.

YOUR SUPPORT ...

TRAIN WITH US...

...TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT...

RIGHT UP UNTIL THE DAY OF THE MATCH.

WHAT USE IS THAT?

THE SPARRING PARTNER IS SCARED OUT OF HIS WITS?

BUT ...

PLEASE BE FORGIV-ING.

HA HA HA!!

LET US BEGIN THEN!!

KLAR

YAH!

HUF

HUF

NEXT !!

URGH !!

THUNK

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, SEIJŪRŌ?

WHICH ONE OF YOU IS LESS POLISHED NOW?

YOUR YEAR OF TRAINING WAS TIME ILL SPENT, DENSHICHIRŌ.

YAH!
I NEEDED THAT TIME TO GROW.
!!
TAK
I'M STILL GROWING, MY BROTHER.
YES ...
Flp

...I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SEE THE ANTS CRAWLING ALONG THE GROUND.

IF I COULD SOAR HIGH IN THE CLOUDS LIKE AN EAGLE...

THE ANTS ARE ON THE GROUND CRAWLING ALONG.

BUT THEY *ARE* THERE.

STEP BY STEP...
...THEY MOVE FORWARD WITH GREAT JOY.

BECAUSE EVEN IF YOU HAVE, I'M STILL GOING TO WIN!

KLAK

I HOPE YOU'VE GROWN, MUSASHI.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT, ŌTA-GURO!!

I'M NOT DONE YET!!

I'LL WIN FOR THEM TOO!!

NOT JUST FOR ME, BUT ALSO FOR THESE MEN.

TIME TO TURN IN...

FWOOSH

.....

OKAY, TIME TO TURN IN...

SLISH
FWIP

Vagabond

(FWOOSH)

.....
SWUP

HAAAH
BRR BRR
I-I'LL END UP FREEZING TO DEATH IN THIS COLD.
ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

SWISH
I'M ALREADY TOO STIFF.

MY BODY'LL FREEZE.
I'LL STIFFEN UP.

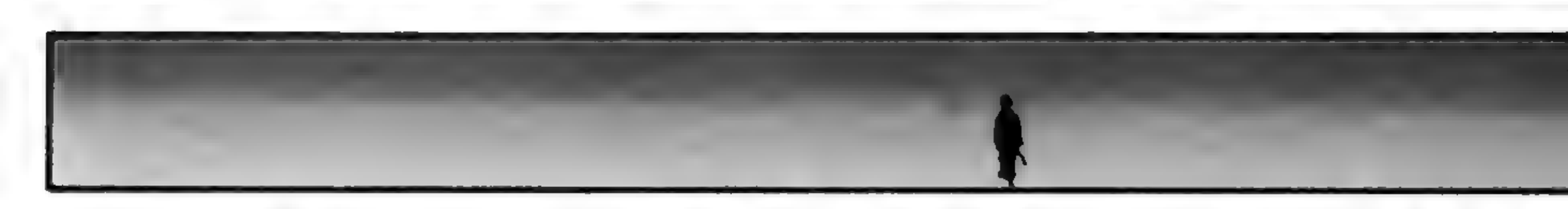
UTILIZING A SURPRISE ATTACK, WAIT UNTIL YOUR OPPONENT'S BODY IS COLD AND TIGHT.

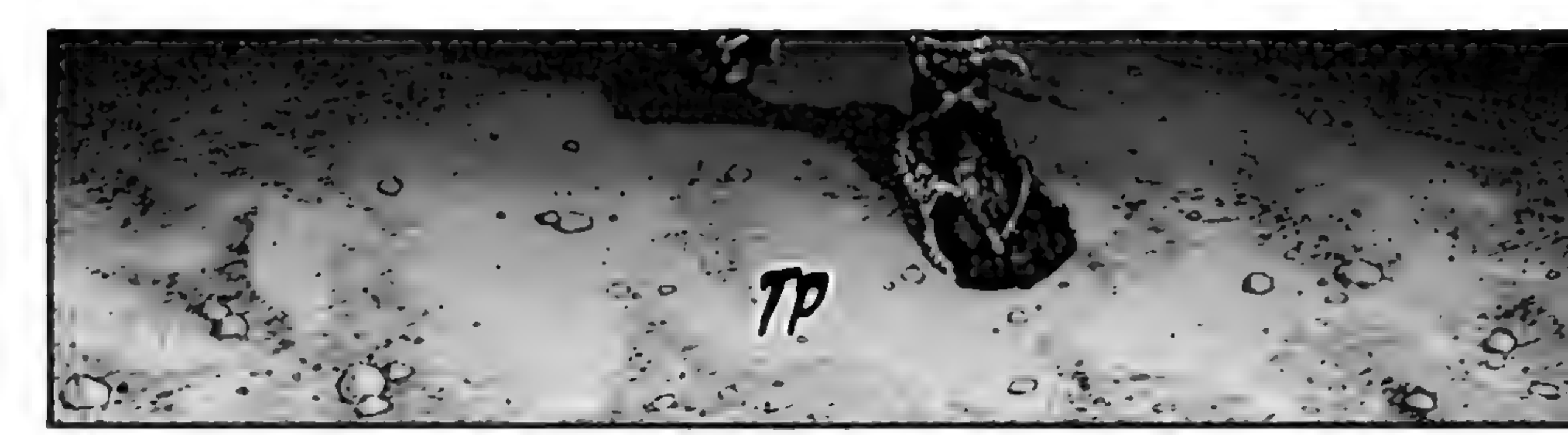
I SHOULD WRITE THAT DOWN.

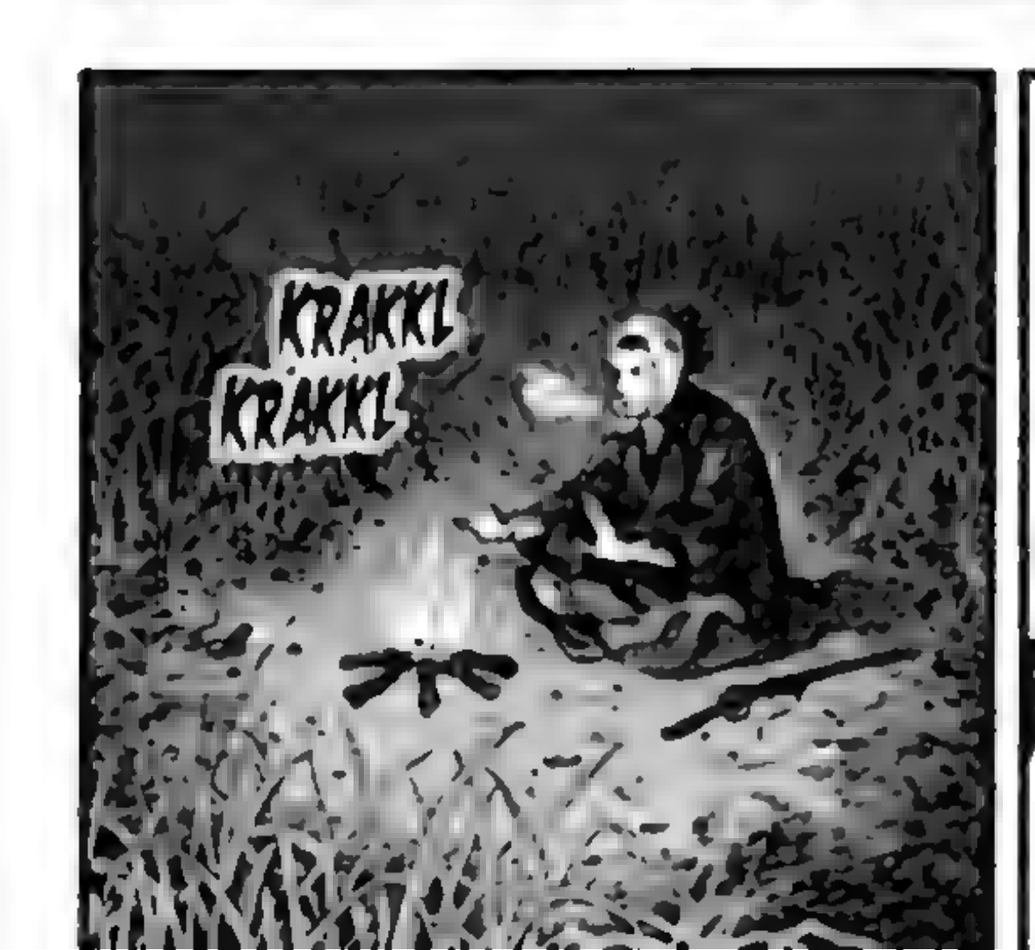
HOW ABOUT THIS...

WAIT...

HM...

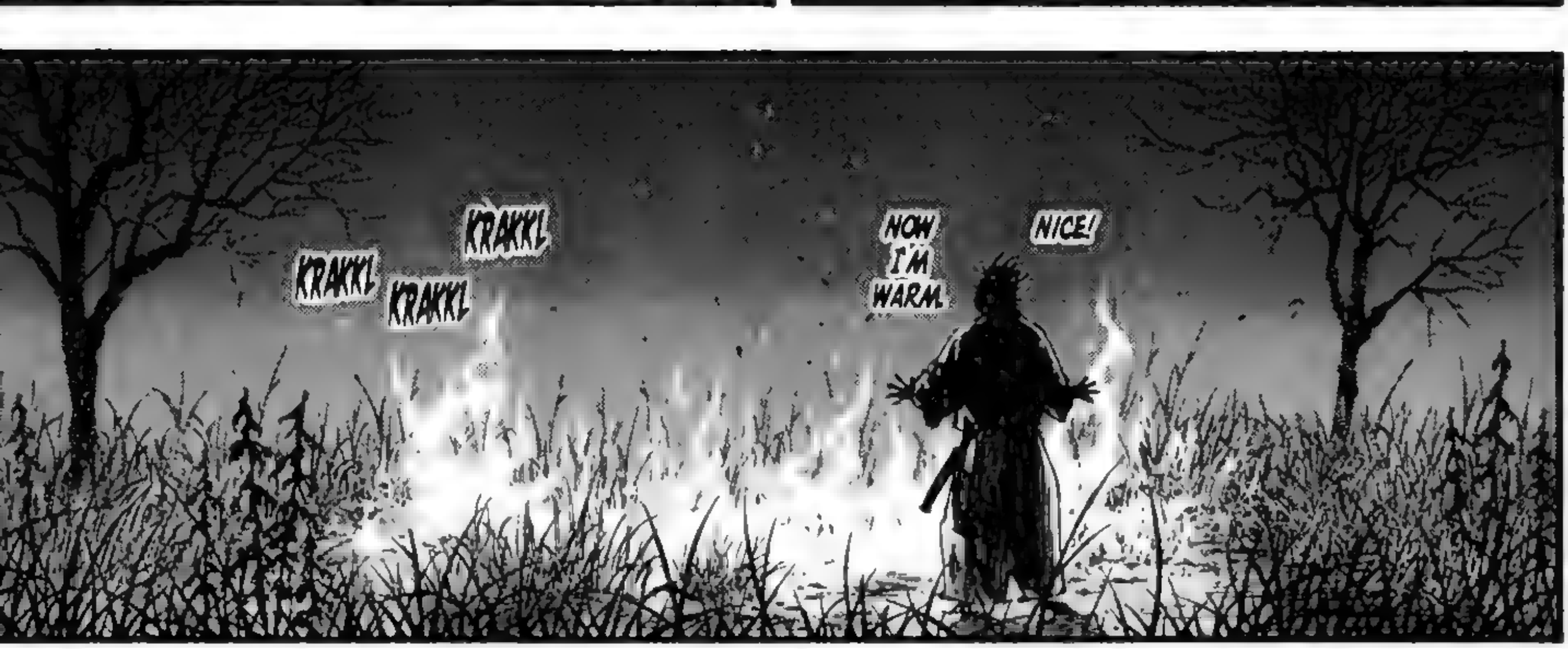






KRAKKL
KRAKKL
KRAKKL
THE DRY LEAVES BURN REALLY WELL!
BURN! BURN!

MAYBE I'LL SPREAD THE FIRE OUT A BIT...


KRAKKL
KRAKKL
KRAKKL
KRAKKL
NOW I'M WARM.
NICE!

...
...
FICH
FICH

KRRRRR

HUH?

TP
TP
THIS COULD BE APPLIED TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD...
...BUT ONCE IT DOES...
A FLAME DOES NOT LIGHT EASILY ...
...IT CAN GO WILD.
THIS SHOULD BE OKAY.
PHEW
HMM...
SOMEONE DIED IN BATTLE HERE...
.....

COME TO THINK OF IT, THIS ISN'T THE MOST PLEASANT OF PLACES.

HAH HA.

KRAKKL

KRAKKL

KRAKKL

NEW YEAR'S DAY IS ALMOST HERE.

#185 | Rendaiji

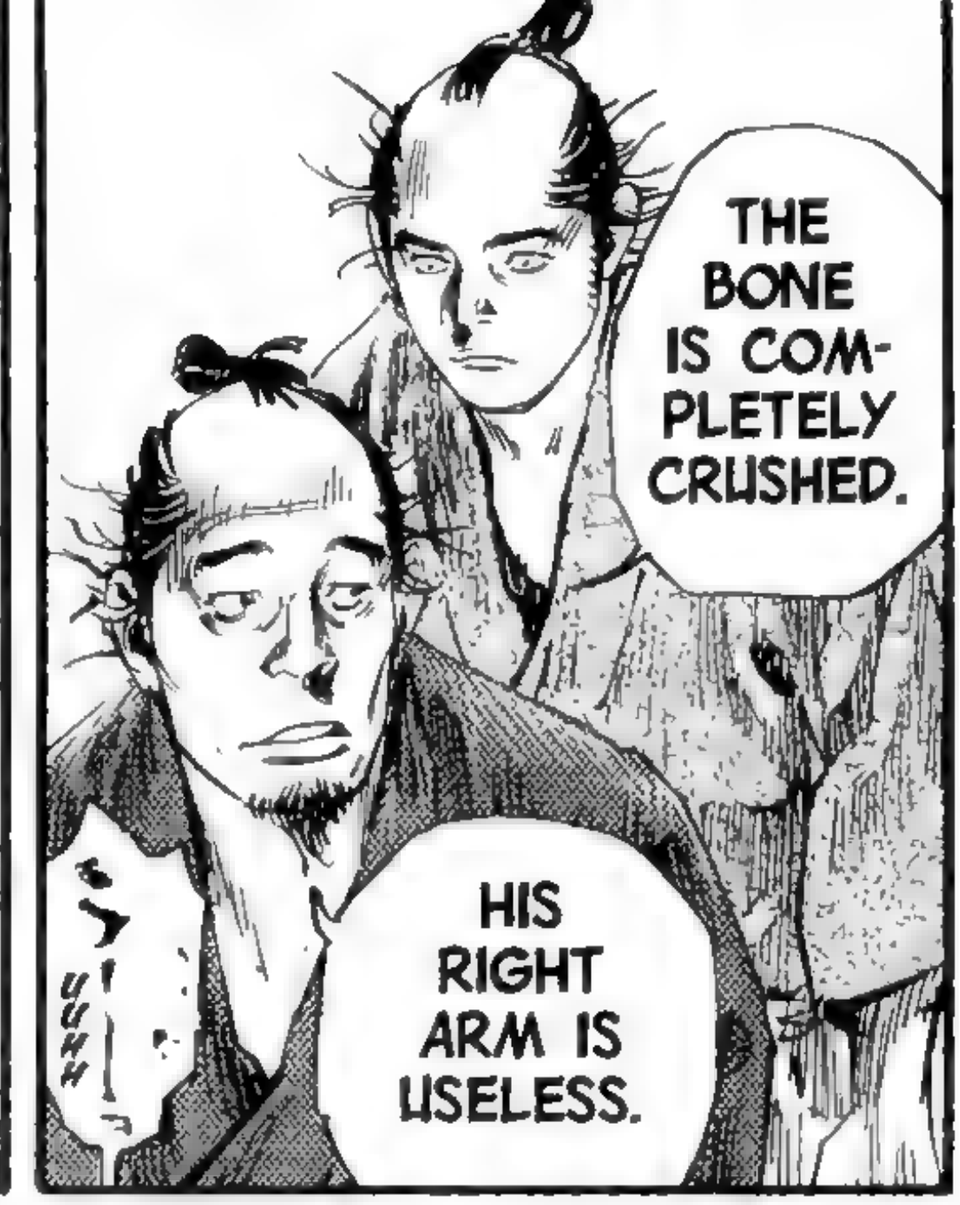
THWAK

AARGH!

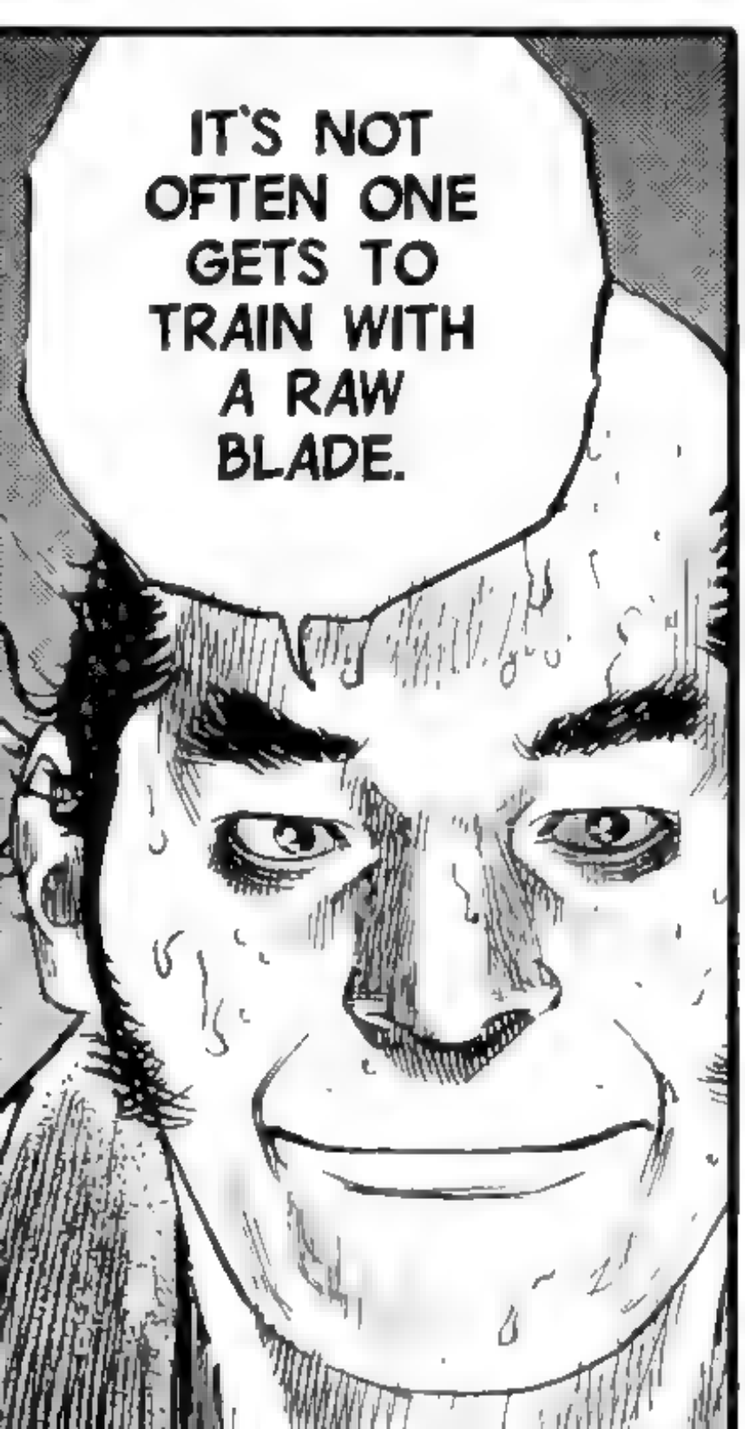
NNGH!

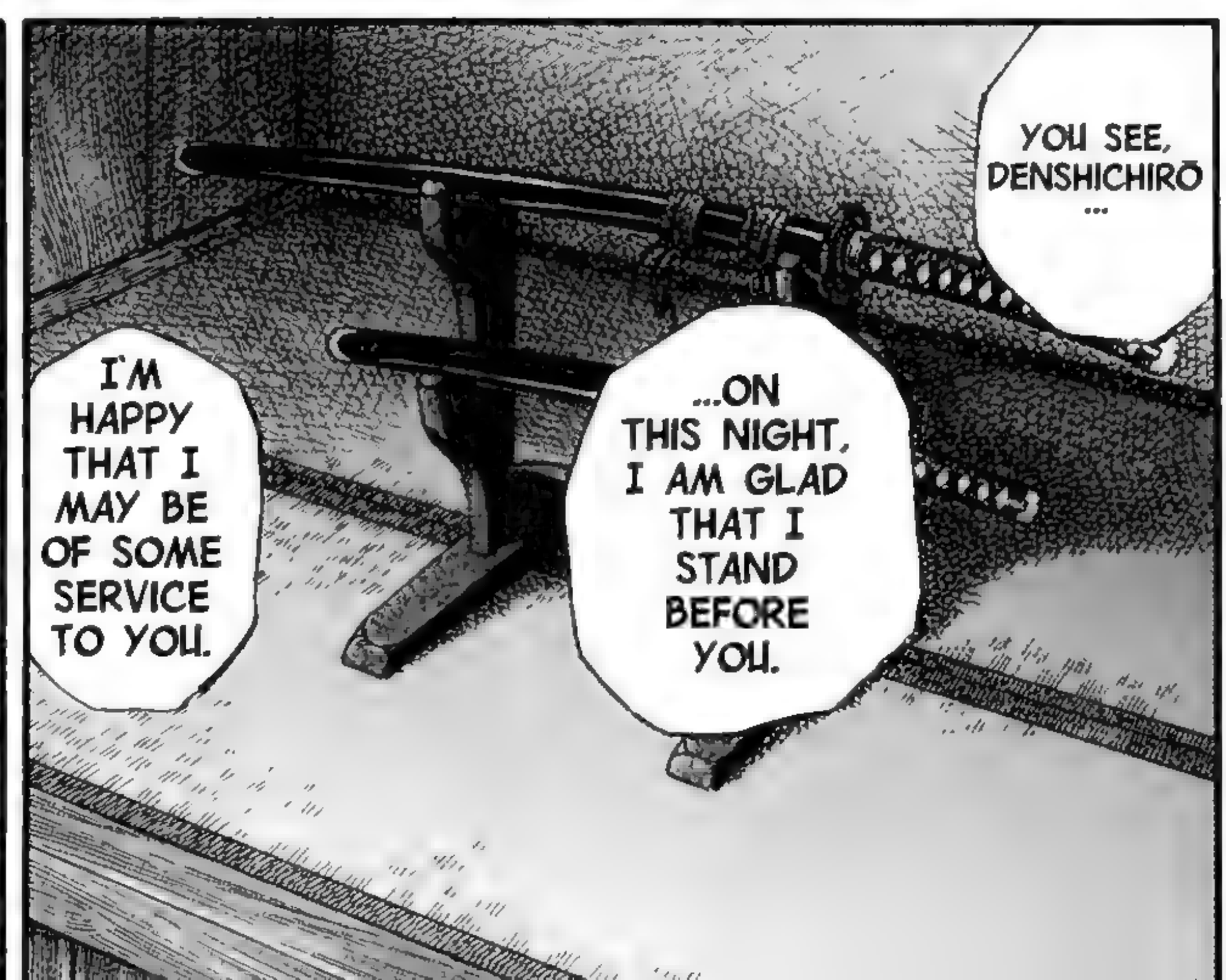
WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?

I'M SORRY, ŌTAGURO.
THAT'S ...
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY.


THE BONE IS COMPLETELY CRUSHED.
HIS RIGHT ARM IS USELESS.

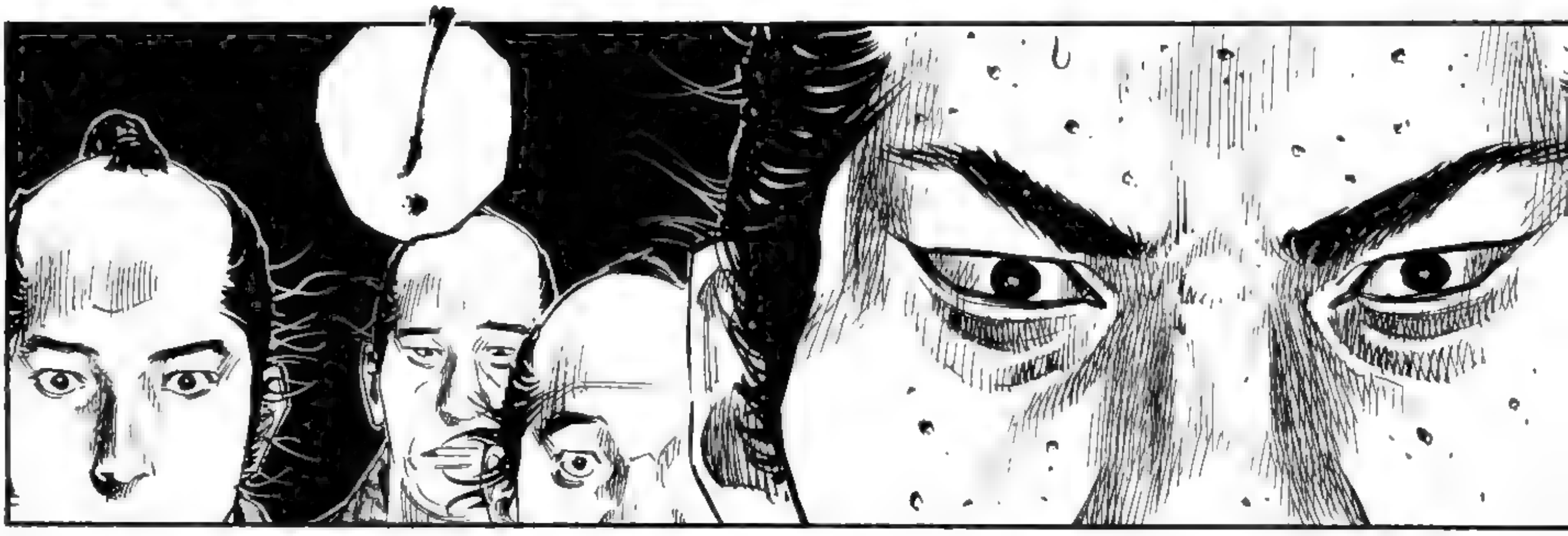
I'VE BEEN WITH THE YOSHIOKA FOR 22 YEARS.
IVE ALWAYS BEEN PREPARED TO SACRIFICE AN ARM OR TWO FOR THE SAKE OF THE CLAN.

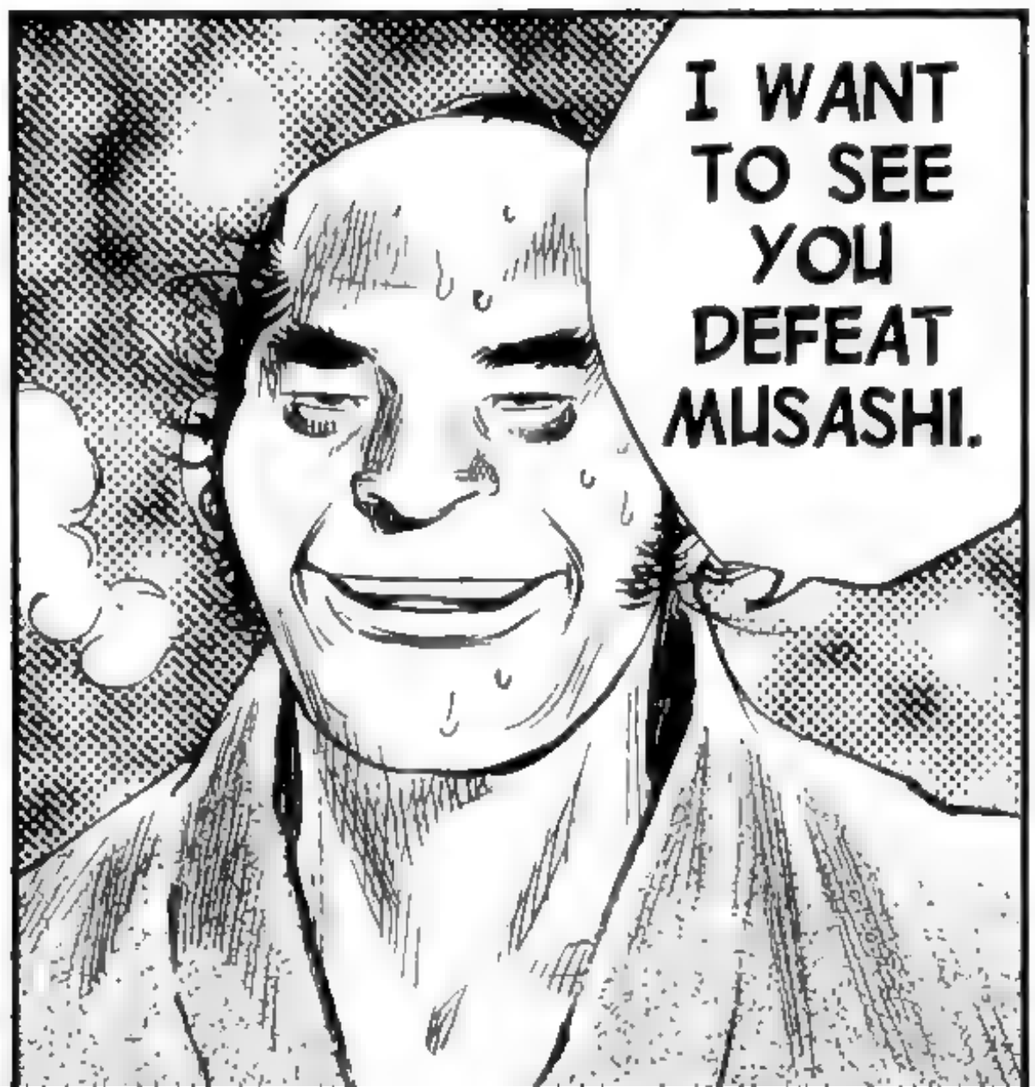

IT'S NOT OFTEN ONE GETS TO TRAIN WITH A RAW BLADE.


YOU SEE, DENSHICHIRŌ ...
I'M HAPPY THAT I MAY BE OF SOME SERVICE TO YOU.
...ON THIS NIGHT, I AM GLAD THAT I STAND BEFORE YOU.

CUT ME DOWN.

AS IF I WERE MUSASHI.



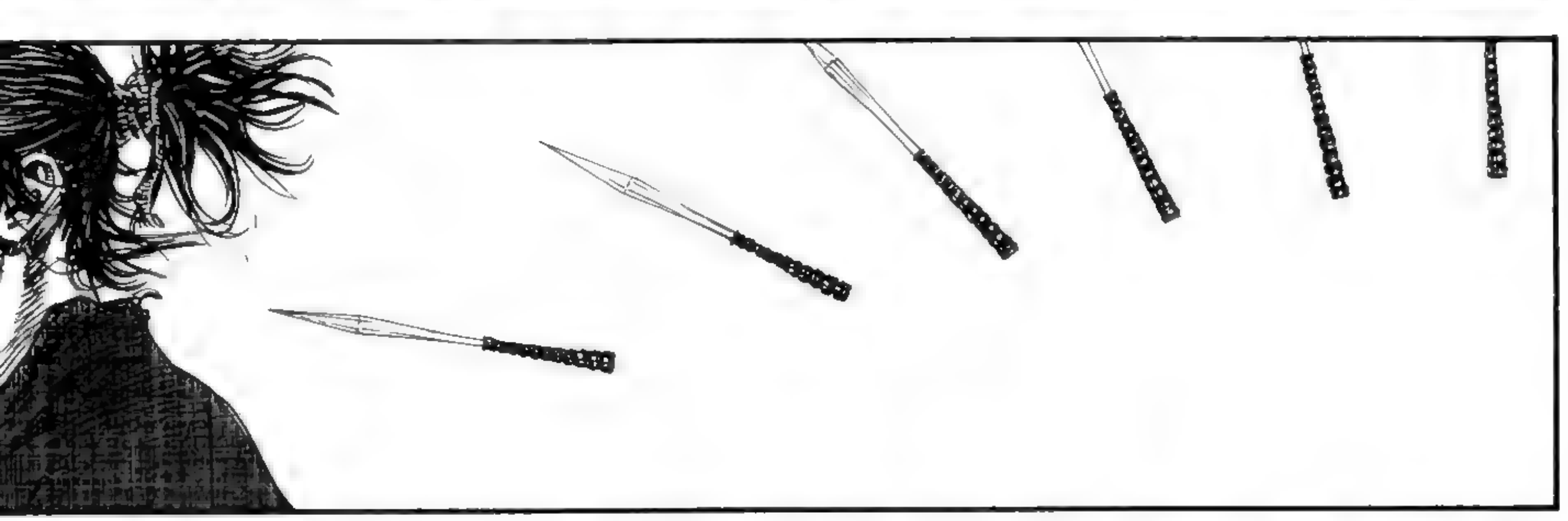


ŌTAGURO ...
VERY WELL...

STAND ON GUARD, OR I'LL BEAT YOU SENSELESS.
THINK OF THIS ARM AS MUSASHI'S, NOT SOME USELESS LOG!

NNGH!!
NOW THEN, DENSHICHIRŌ SENSEI!!

I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED.



TUNK

SUCH CAT-LIKE QUICKNESS.

IMPRES-SIVE.

MASTERS OF MEOW.

THEY'VE BEEN AMONG MY TEACHERS TOO.

SEIJŪRŌ !!

HM.

FICH

!

FWP

YOU WERE THE ONE WATCHING ME.

SO IT WAS YOU...

...SO WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO ENGAGE IN SOME SORT OF SENSATIONAL FIGHT.

I TRIED TO ATTACK YOU FROM BEHIND...

WHAT?

I HAVE A FEELING...

...THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE RESORTED TO SOMETHING LIKE THIS!!

ARE THOSE THE WORDS WORTHY OF THE HEAD OF THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL?

.....

IN ANY CASE...
...THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED.

Vagabond

(COULD YOU REPEAT THAT?)
(HUH?)

SNEAKING IN THE DARK...

...TO KILL ONE WHO'S A THREAT AGAINST YOUR SCHOOL.

YOU CALL YOURSELF HEAD OF THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL?

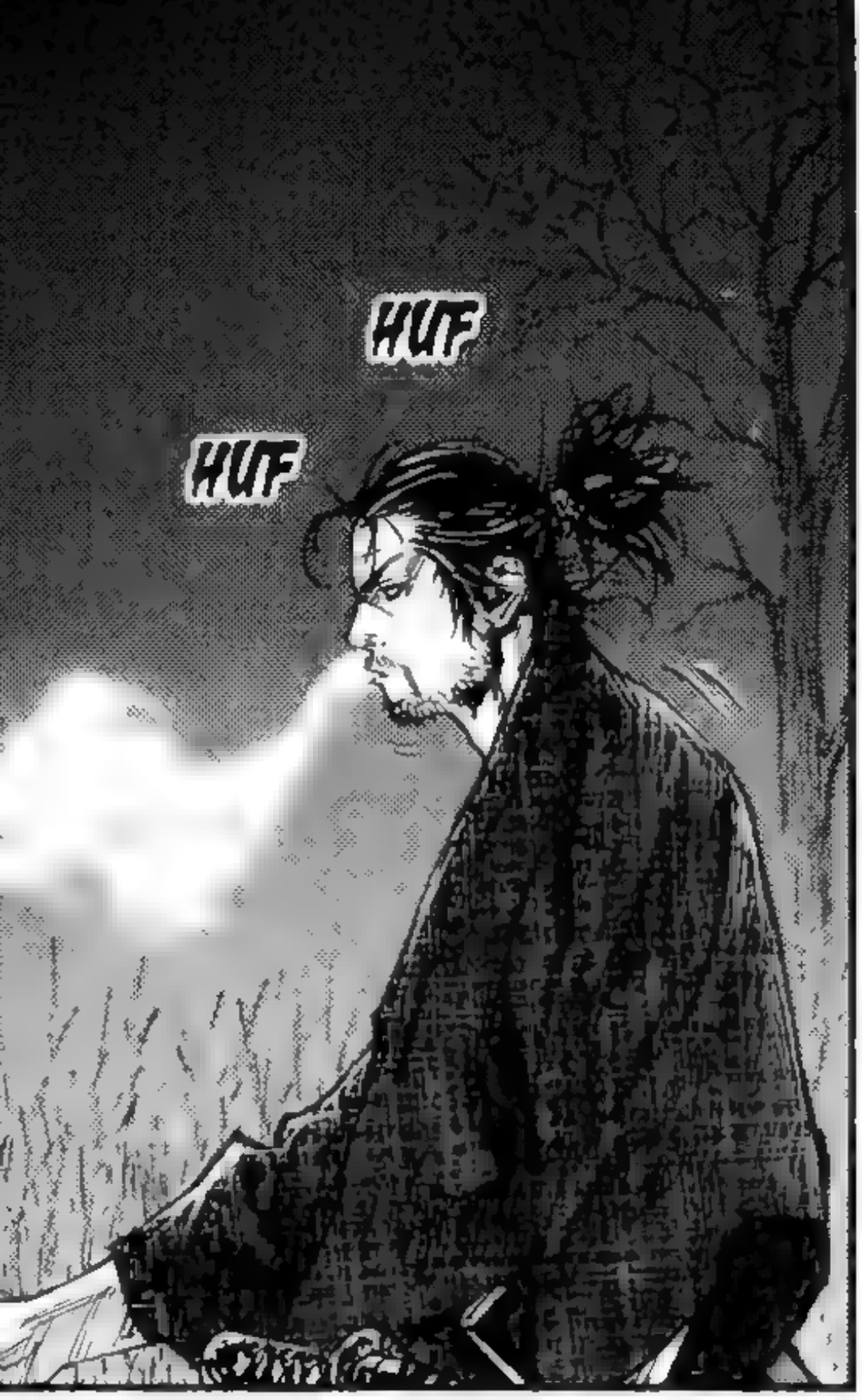
...I BET THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME YOU'VE RESORTED TO SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

SOME-THING LIKE THIS?

WELL, IN ANY CASE...

...THIS IS WHAT I WANTED.

#186 Altercation After Dark


HUF
HUF

THAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN, I SUPPOSE...
THMP-THUMP
HMPH.

HM?
I WANT TO ASK YOU SOME-THING...
MIND IF WE TALK FIRST?

IT'S NOT IMPORTANT.
.....
AHEM.
FORGET IT.

UH...
HMPH
SO GO AHEAD AND ASK YOUR QUESTION.

HAH, YOU'RE SO FUNNY.
LET ME WARN YOU, I WON'T BE DISTRACTED AND FALL PREY TO A LAME SURPRISE ATTACK.
I KNOW YOU CAN'T WAIT TO START.

FICH

YES, BEFORE IT GETS ANY COLDER...

SO... SHALL WE GET STARTED THEN?

FICH

TRUE...

BOTH OUR SWORDS ARE ALREADY DRAWN AFTER ALL.

A FIGHT TO START OUT THE NEW YEAR...

HEH HEH.

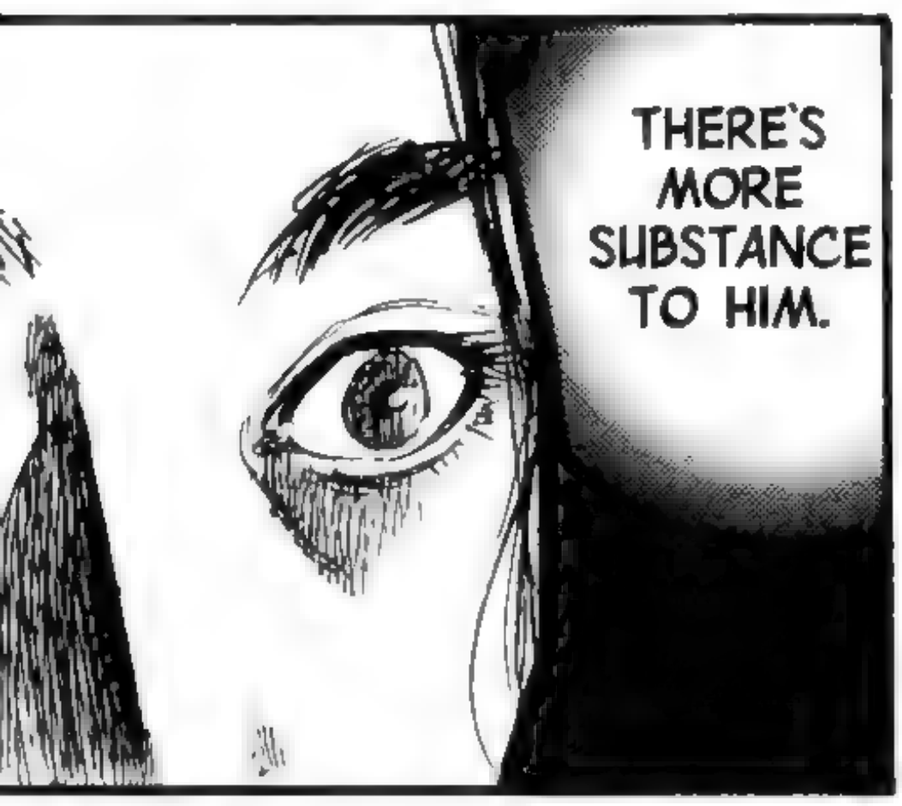
YOU MUST REALLY LIKE FIGHTING.

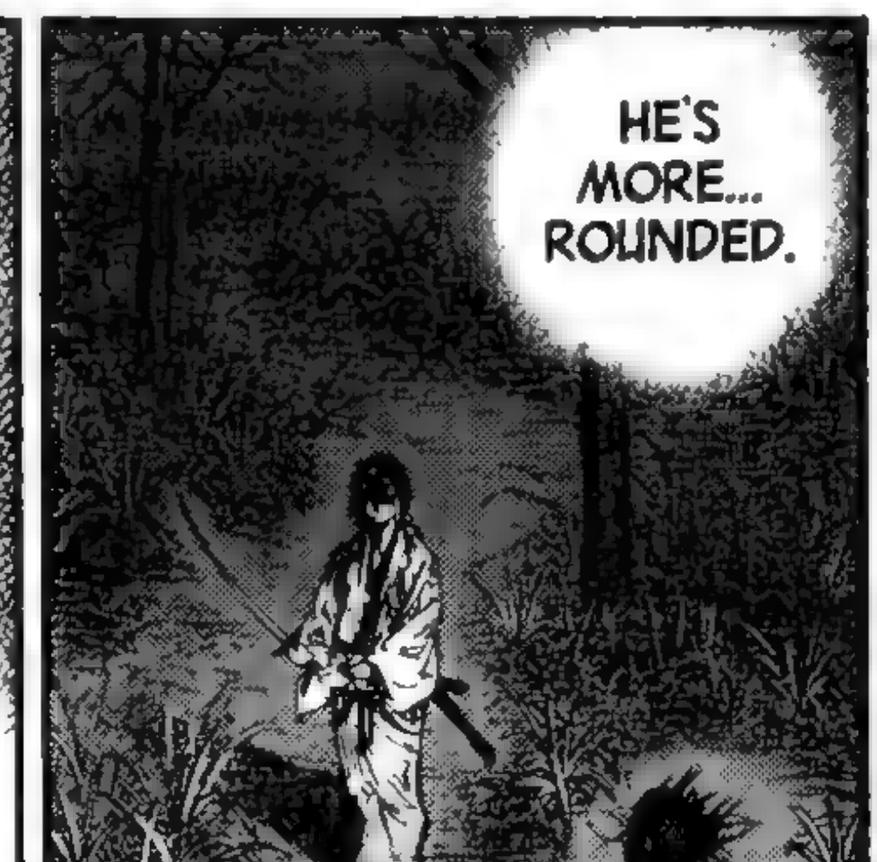
AREN'T YOU THE SAME WAY?

OF COURSE I AM.
HUF
HUF
FWOMM

MORE SUBSTANTIAL.

HE'S DIFFER-ENT.





SISSH

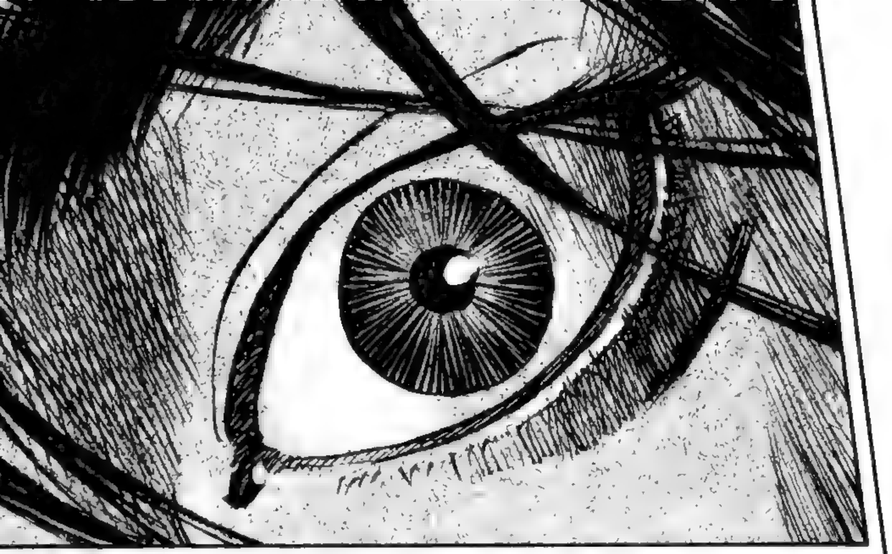
I WENT STRAIGHT FOR HIS EYES.
HUH?!
NOT AGAIN ?!
SO THIS IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DOOR AND COTTON...
!!

MOSH

FICH

TWK

HIS ATTACK IS HEAVY LIKE WET COTTON.
HOW COULD HE HAVE CHANGED SO MUCH IN A YEAR?



SHAA!
しゃ

SLISH

HUF
HUF
HUF

ARRGH!
KEEP STILL, ŌTA-GURO.
URR...
NNGH...

DASH

HUF
...
HUF
HUF

M-MAGNIFICENT STROKE, DENSHICHIRŌ!
EXCUSE ME... DENSHICHIRŌ *SENSE!!!*

THAT'S RIGHT, AND THIS ONE, HE'S GOT THE THICKEST ARM AMONG US ALL.
HA HA.

IT'S NO EASY FEAT TO CUT OFF AN ARM WITH ONE CLEAN STROKE.
RIGHT, EVERY-ONE?!

HMM.

ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT, THIS ARM OF MINE TOOK COUNTLESS NUMBER OF PRACTICE SWINGS...
HA HA
THAT'S WHY IT'S SO THICK WITH HARDENED MUSCLE.

THANK YOU...
...FOR THOSE 22 YEARS.

WE ARE BEHIND YOU.

DEN-SHICHIRŌ SENSEI!!
MUSASHI IS NOTHING.

VICTORY !!

VICTORY !!

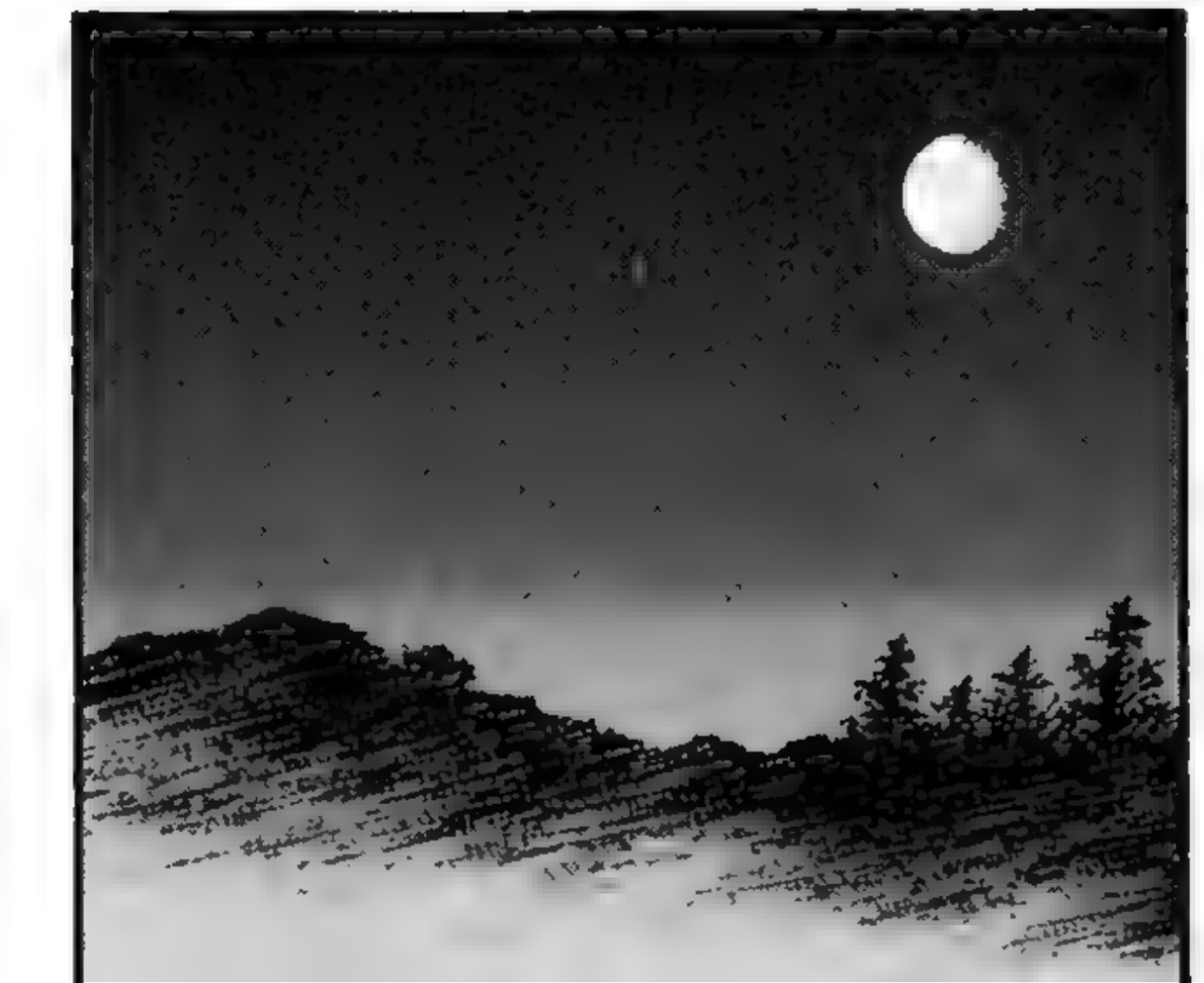
VICTORY !!

SEIJŪRŌ...

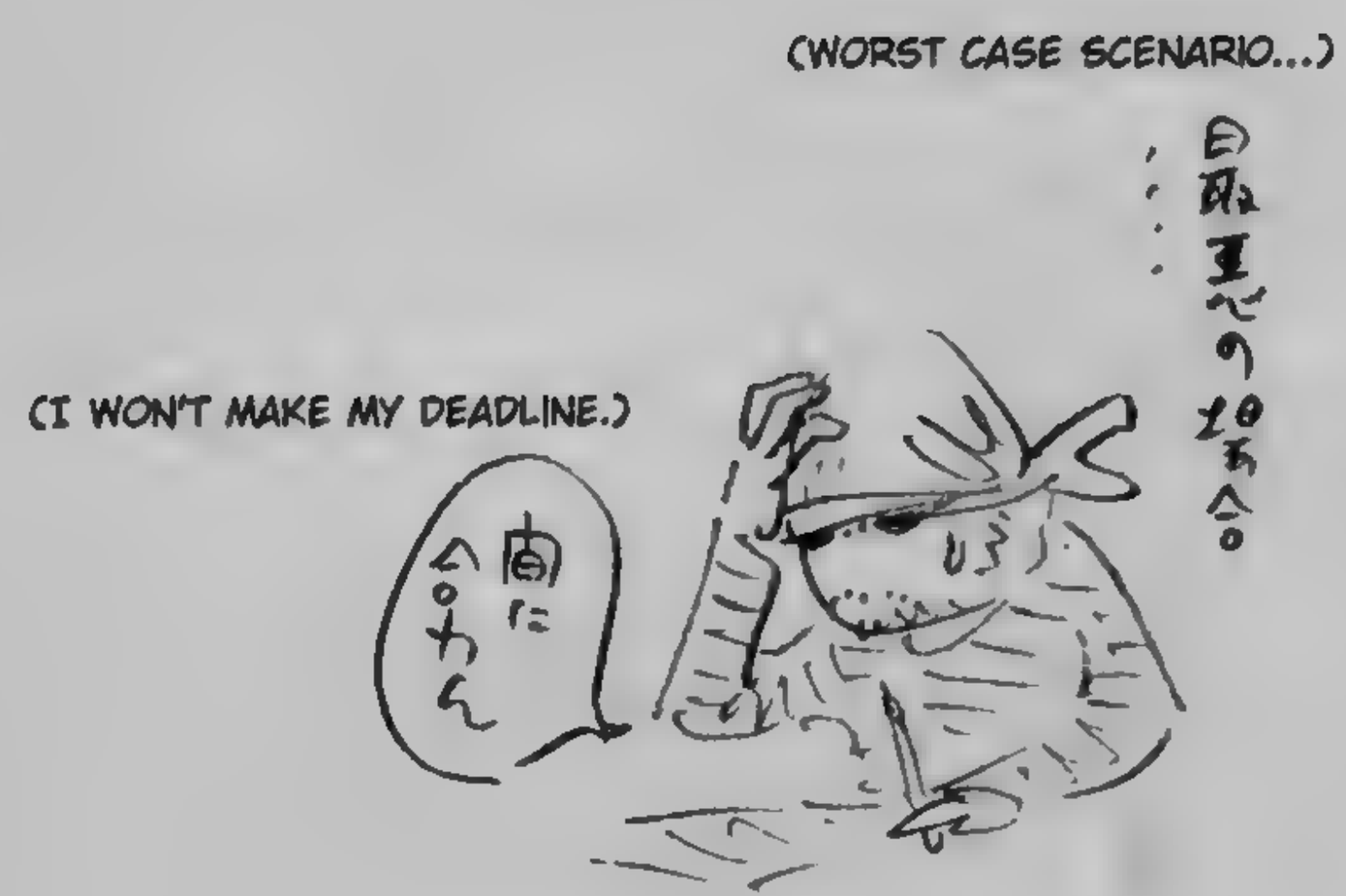
I MIGHT ONLY HAVE TEN DAYS LEFT BUT...
EVEN IF HE REFUSED, I SHOULD HAVE BEGGED HIM...
THERE WAS NO NEED FOR ME TO GO TO THE YAGYŪ. I SHOULD HAVE ASKED MY OWN BROTHER FOR INSTRUCTION.

I KNOW I CAN GROW STRONGER BY TRAINING WITH YOU!!

THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO...



Vagabond


(WORST CASE SCENARIO...)
(I WON'T MAKE MY DEADLINE.)
間に合わん
最悪の場合。

BROTHER SEIJŪRŌ...

I KNOW I CAN GROW STRONGER BY TRAINING WITH YOU!!

#187 Before Dawn

SHOOSH

A FOOL...

I WAS A FOOL.
WHOOSH

I TRAINED WITH THE IMAGE OF HIS SWORD BURNED INTO THE BACK OF MY MIND.
I FIRST PICKED UP A SWORD TO BE LIKE MY BROTHER.

BY LOOKING AWAY FROM HIM...
...I WAS DENYING MYSELF.

THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO STAY UP.

YOU CAN TALK TO HIM TOMORROW AFTER YOU WAKE UP.

AHEM.

.....

I'LL WAIT FOR HIM TO RETURN.

IT'S ALMOST DAWN.

GET SOME SLEEP, UEDA.

GO ON HOME.

I'M WAITING HERE.

...TO ASK HIM FOR HELP TO TRAIN ME.

AHEM

I INSULTED HIM TOO MUCH.

I'M EMBAR-RASSED.

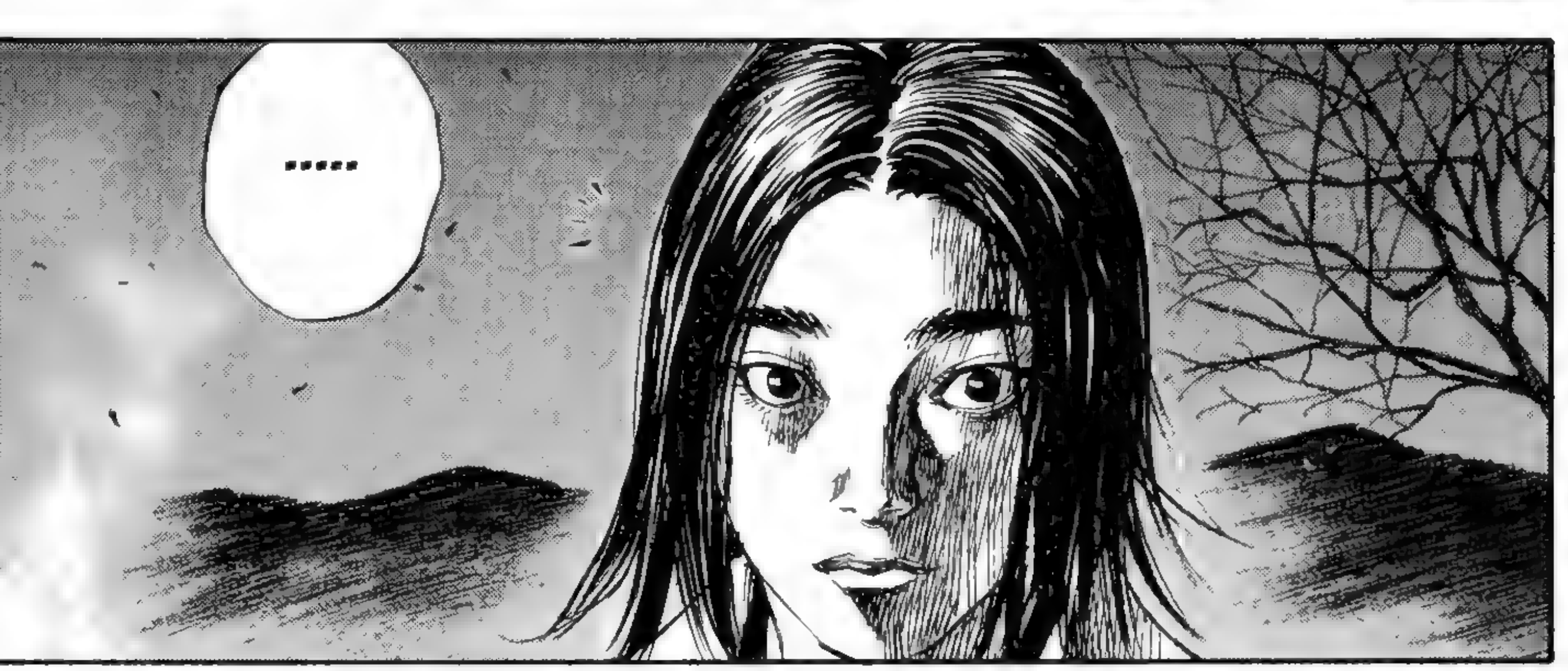
AHEM

THIS IS MY CHANCE.

WOULDN'T THE DAWN OF THE NEW YEAR BE THE MOST FITTING OCCASION TO START SOMETHING I COULD NEVER DO IN THE PAST?

I'M DETER-MINED.

.....
.....
FWOM
FWOM


.....

THERE'S NO POINT IN GETTING TO KNOW SOMEONE YOU'RE ABOUT TO KILL.
BUT I DO UNDERSTAND YOUR URGE TO TALK.
IT'S STRANGE ...

HOW DID YOU SPEND THE PAST YEAR? WHO DID YOU MEET AND WHAT DID YOU DO?

I'M CURIOUS ABOUT YOU...

FWOM

FWOM

TP

TP

HE DOESN'T HEAR ME.

ZWOOSH
FOOSH

!
FICH
FICH
FICH
FICH

TP
TP
FWOOSH

FICH
FICH

FWOM
FWOM

FICH
!!

KUF
KUF

HYUU
HYUU

KOF
KOF

KRIK
KRIK

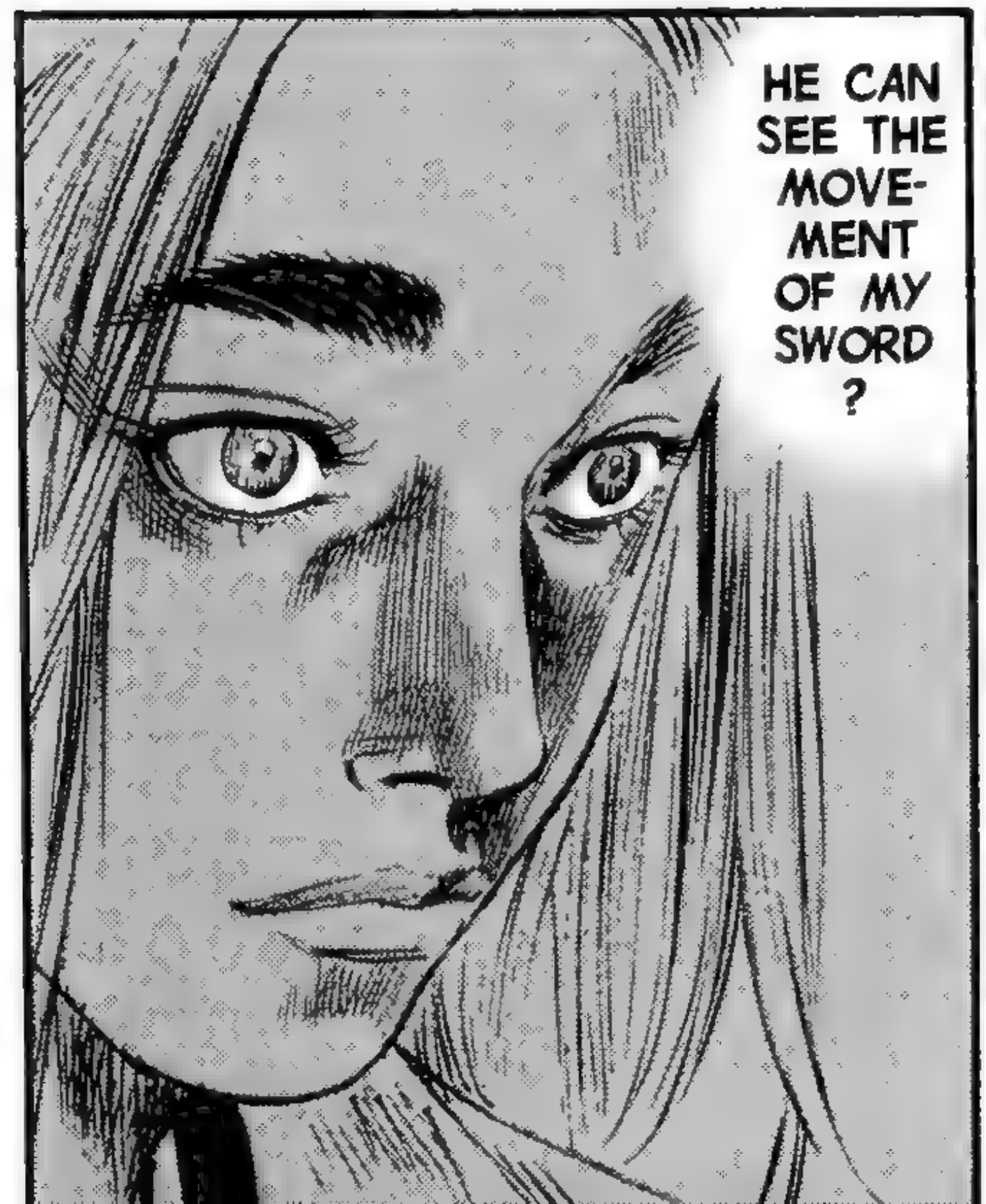
FSH

FWOM
FWOM

I WAS FORTUNATE TO ENCOUNTER YOUR SWORD A YEAR AGO...
MMBL

...
GASP

NOT THAT I SAW IT THEN AS CLEARLY AS I DO NOW.
MMBL


HE CAN SEE THE MOVE-MENT OF MY SWORD ?

FWOM

HE'S BLUFFING.

THUNK

TUNK

UNGH!

!

HUF
HUF
HUF
YOU REALLY DO SEE MY SWORD.
I WAS AIMING STRAIGHT FOR YOUR HEART, BUT YOU MANAGED TO GUARD IT WITH YOUR SHOULDER.

CHIRRP
CHIRRP

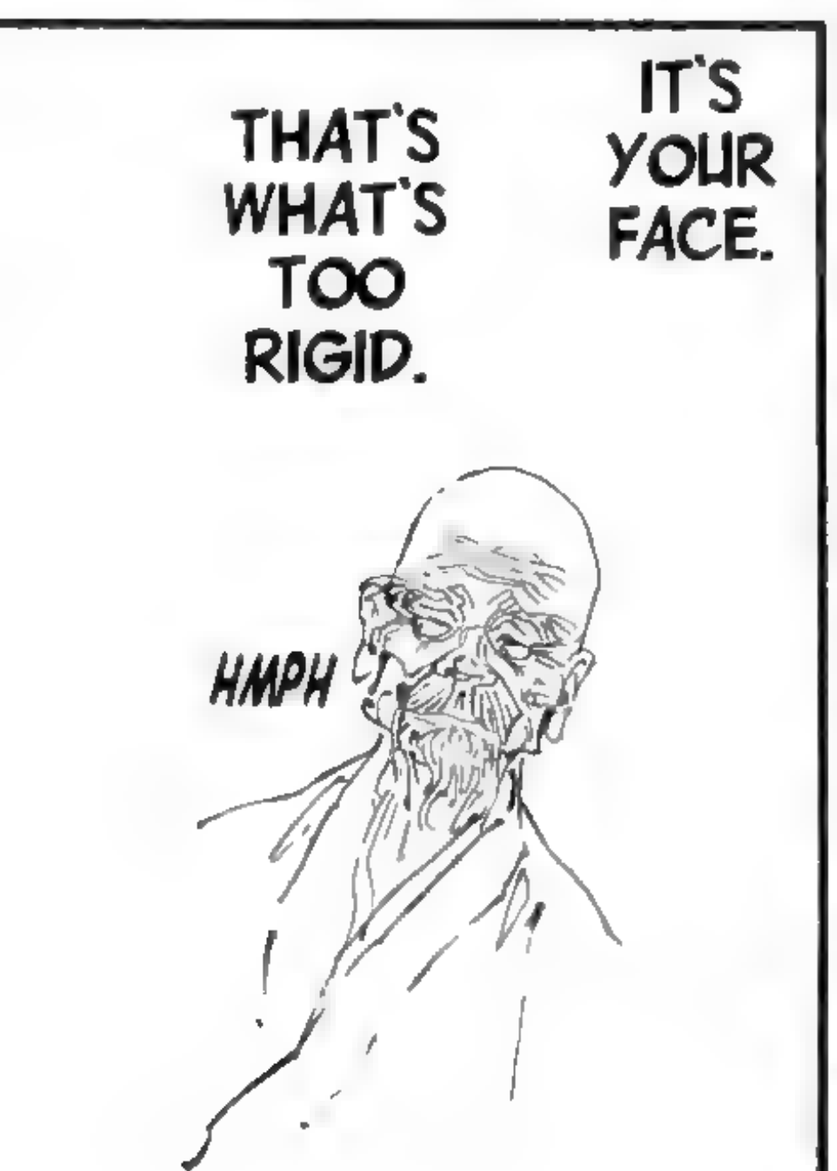
BROTHER...

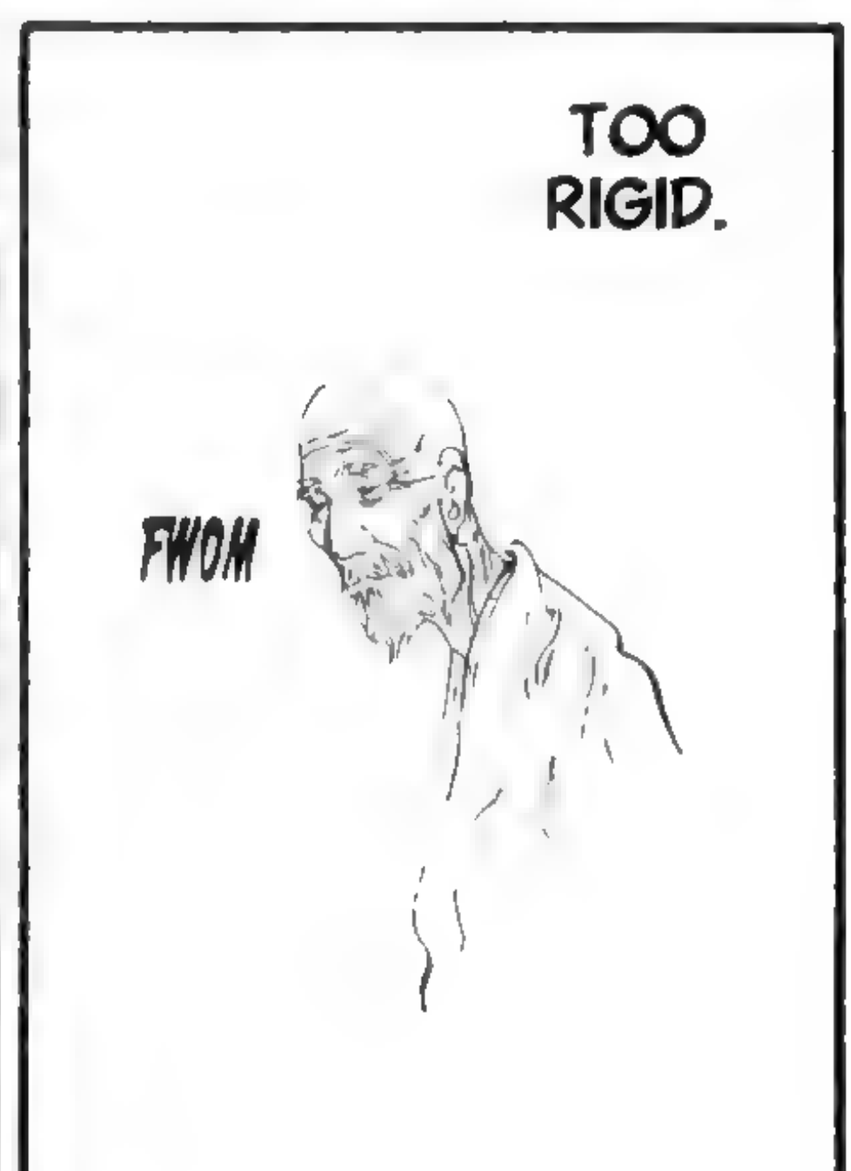
Vagabond

(NOD)
(HUH?)

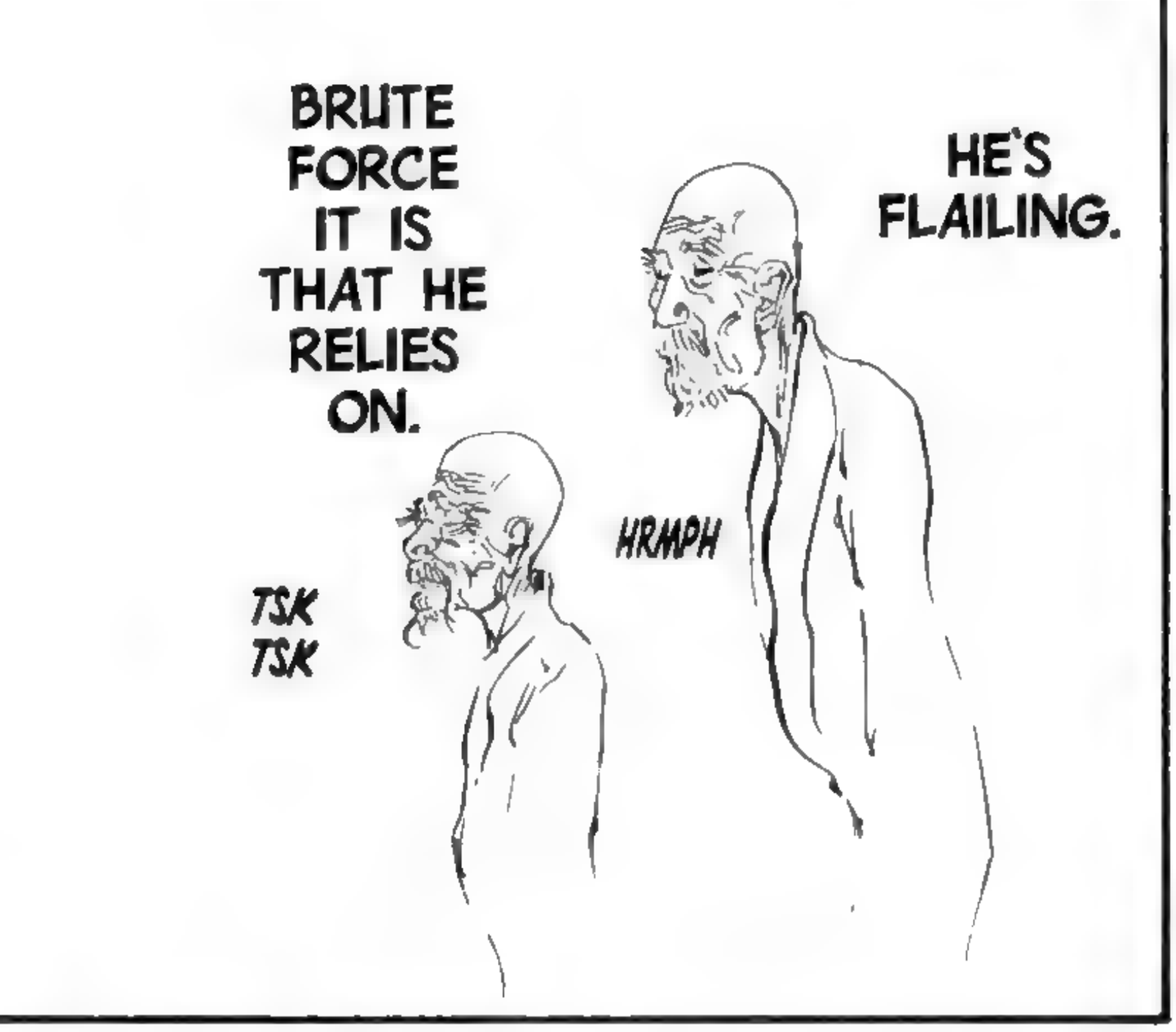
HAVE I CHANGED SO MUCH SINCE LAST YEAR?
I HAVE NO IDEA.

THE ONLY THING I KNOW THAT'S DIFFERENT...


THAT'S WHAT'S TOO RIGID.
IT'S YOUR FACE.
HMPH

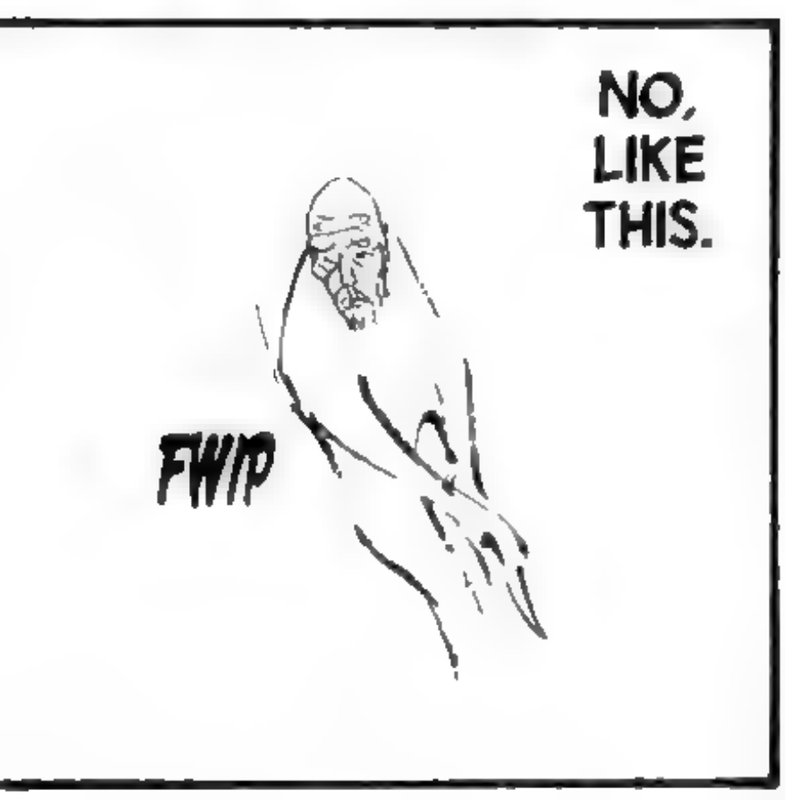

TOO RIGID.
FWOM

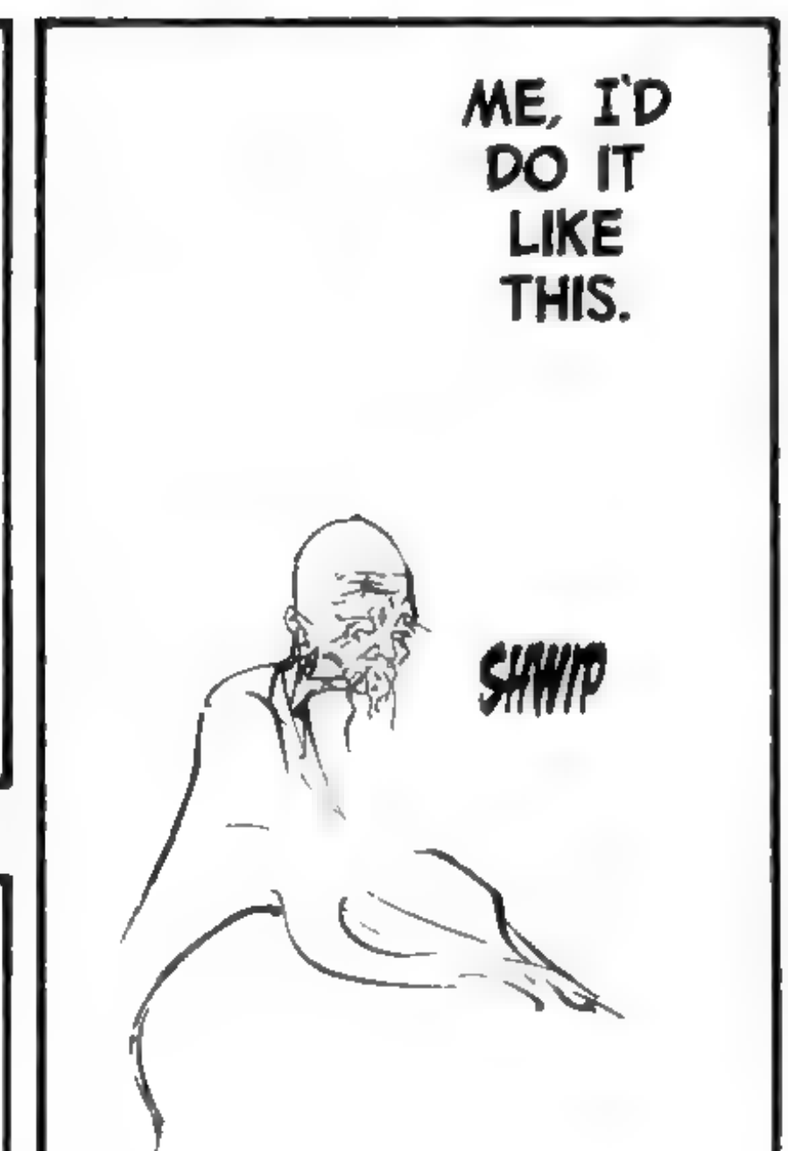
KICKING THOSE EMBERS LIKE THAT.
HRMPH
THAT WAS A MEAN TRICK.
HRMPH

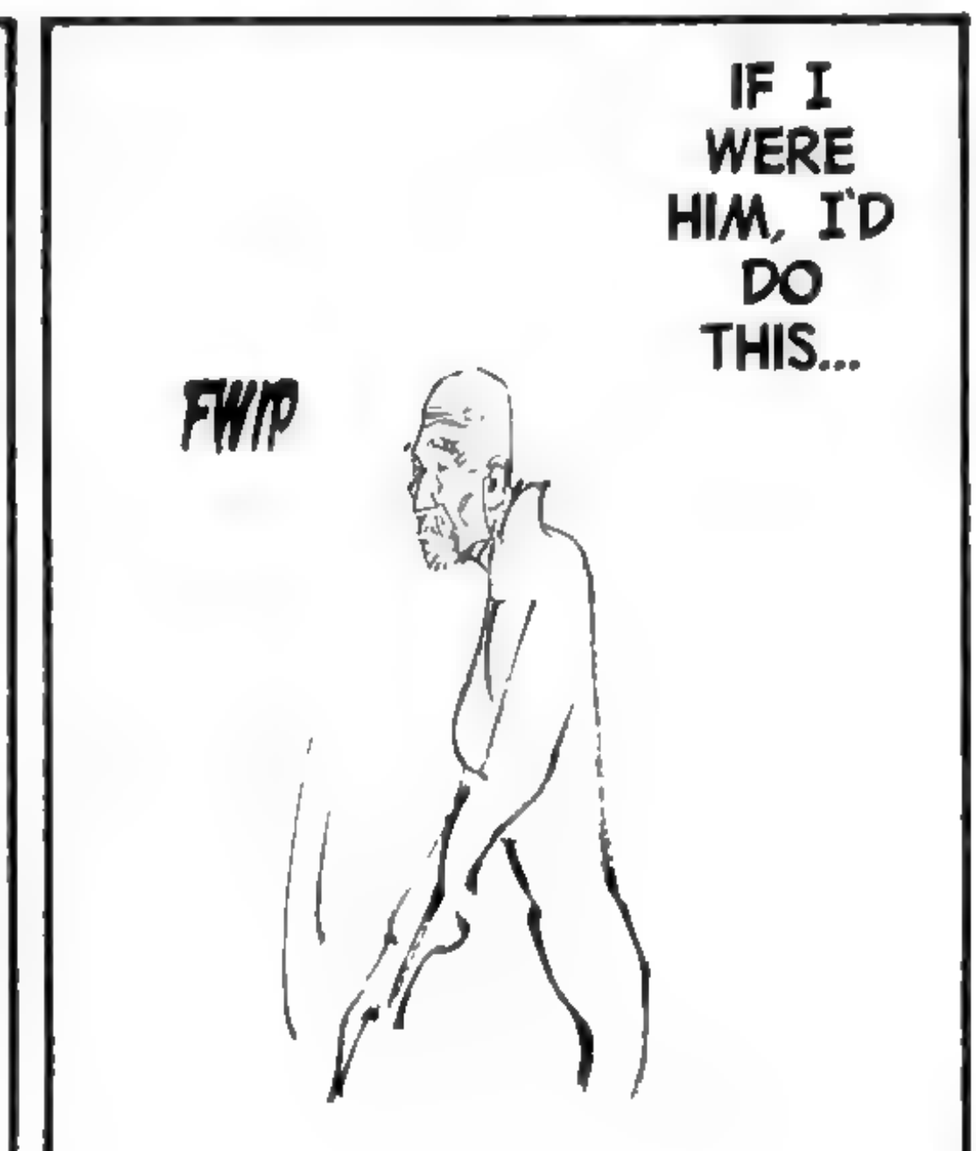

BRUTE FORCE IT IS THAT HE RELIES ON.
HE'S FLAILING.
HRMPH
TSK TSK

I KNOW.

THOSE ATTACKS, TOO EASY TO DODGE, YES.
HIS FACE IS SCARY BUT NOT HIS SWORD.
TSK TSK

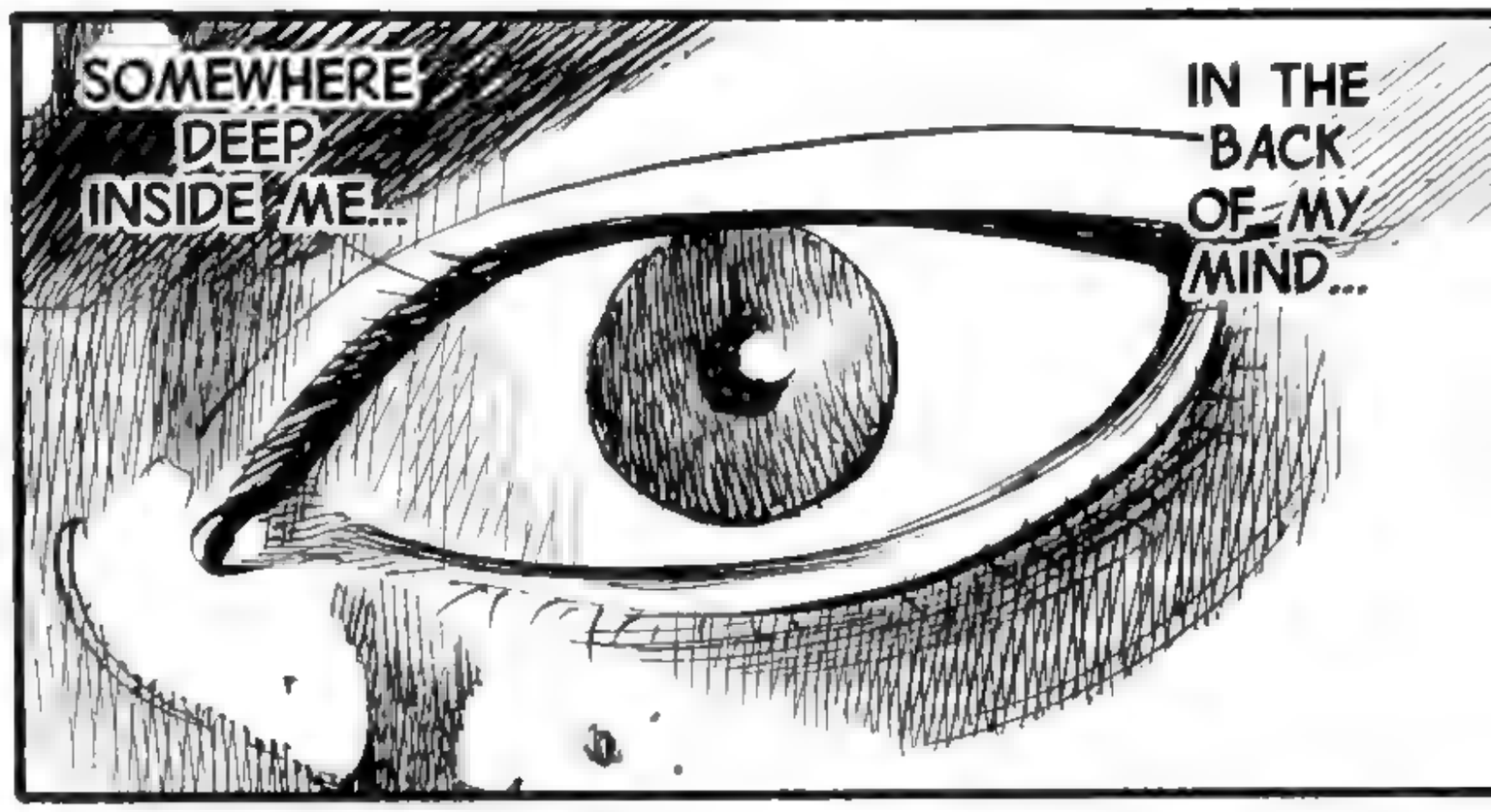

NO, LIKE THIS.
FWIP


ME, I'D DO IT LIKE THIS.
SHWIP


IF I WERE HIM, I'D DO THIS...
FWIP

NO, LIKE THIS, YOU FOOL.
SHWIP

THOSE TWO OLD COOTS ARE THE ONLY THING THAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT ME.



THEY EXIST IN THE VERY SAME PLACE WHERE MY FATHER USED TO DWELL.

MAYBE I HAVE CHANGED.
KLANG

TINK
KCHUNG

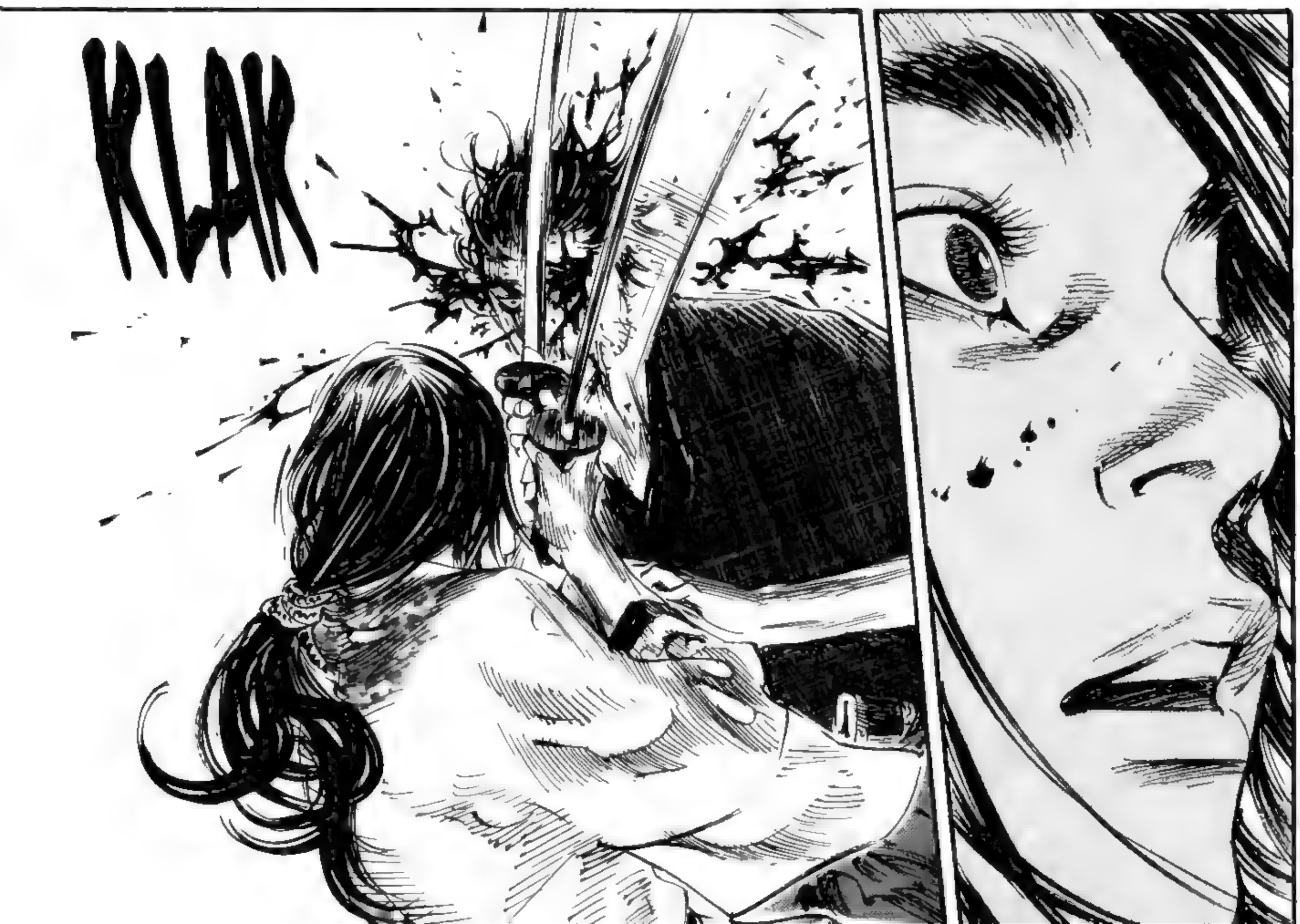
BUT NOW I CAN SEE THE MOVEMENT OF YOUR SWORD!
IMPRESSIVE...
PLISSH
I COULDN'T SEE IT ALL BEFORE...

THE STRONGEST SWORDS-MAN IN KYOTO...

SLISH

PLIPP
PLIPP

FWOOSH
!!


KLAK

SHWA
!!
ARGH...
FWCH
FWCH

URR
ZING

HMM...

SHWP

!!
....

HUF
HUF
PLIP
PLIP
PLIP
HUF

HUF
HUF
NOW WE'RE EVEN.
GOOD...

...HAS DEIGNED TO TAKE ME SERIOUSLY.
FINALLY, THE GREAT YOSHIOKA SEIJŪRŌ SENSEI...
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HOW MANY TIMES ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE ME DRAW MY FATAL STROKE...?

ANYONE WHO WANTS OUT, CAN QUIT.
THE SPIRAL OF KILLING...

THE BATTLEGROUND...
THIS PLACE...

I DON'T CARE...
THEY CAN CALL ME A MURDERER, OR A DEMON.

IT'S THE ONLY PLACE WHERE I BELONG...

MY ANXIETIES ARE BLOCKED OUT.

I CAN FOCUS AND GIVE EVERYTHING I HAVE.

EVERY-
THING...

AT
THIS
POINT...

HIS CONSCIOUSNESS, HIS SENSES SPREAD THROUGHOUT, MUSASHI WASN'T AWARE OF HIS DROOLING MOUTH.
INSTEAD, HIS BODY HAD COMPLETELY TRANSFORMED WITH A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF AWARENESS FOCUSING SOLELY ON SEIJŪRŌ'S BLADE.

THIS WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF MUSASHI'S EPIC BATTLE AGAINST THE ENTIRETY OF THE YOSHIOKA CLAN.

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Critically acclaimed, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga, and in 2003, Inoue was nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for best writer/artist. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords simultaneously—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY* directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this manga are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

A Brief Historical Overview
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weak and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating a federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years. The political stability that resulted put mass numbers of samurai out of work. Masterless samurai, known as *ronin*, were forced to wander the land to seek out employment. This, the beginning of the Edo Period (1600-1868), sets the stage for many of the period dramas and *chambara* sword-fighting films that have popularized the image of the samurai to a Western audience.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple, which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Rengeoin
Located in eastern Kyoto, Rengeoin Temple is more commonly referred to as Sanjusangendo. The main hall of Rengeoin features an amazing display of 1001 Kannon Buddhist statues.

Sasaki Kojiro (dates unknown)
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi, Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

Shinmen Takezo
Miyamoto Musashi's boyhood name.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND,* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

Vagabond

Winner of the 2000 Media Arts Festival Award
Recipient of the 2000 Kodansha Award for Best Manga
Winner of the 2002 Tezuka Osamu Cultural Award
Nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for Best Writer/Artist

The highly anticipated return of ***Vagabond***—the story of the life and times of Miyamoto Musashi, a man striving for enlightenment by way of the sword, destined to become the most renowned samurai of all time!

After one year, Musashi returns to Kyoto for a rematch with the Yoshioka brothers. Musashi is a changed man, but does he have what it takes to overcome the ferocity of the younger brother, Denshichiro, and the sublime skills of the older brother, Seijuro?

$9.95 USA/$13.95 CAN

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This book reads from right to left.